CHECHNYA

CONFLICT EXTENDS TO AREAS SOUTH OF GROZNY

In recent days ICRC teams have stepped up their distribution of medicines and surgical supplies to hospitals in Chechnya. So far 17 hospitals, five of which are in the capital, Grozny, have received supplies to help them cope with an increasing influx of casualties. Air attacks on the outskirts of Stari Atagi (15 km south-east of Grozny) on 2 January and on the town of Shali (10 km south-east of the capital) the next day left dozens of people dead or wounded. The ICRC also distributed 10,000 sq m of plastic sheeting and 1,700 blankets to needy civilians.

More medical supplies and food parcels are on their way from the ICRC's warehouses in the Black Sea port of Sochi and the Caspian port of Baku (Azerbaijan). A convoy from Sochi has been held up for several days in Daghestan because of customs formalities.

Meanwhile ICRC delegates in Geneva, Moscow and Chechnya are making representations to all the parties to the conflict in order to gain access to prisoners and to civilians trapped by the fighting. The ICRC has also urged all combatants to respect the minimum rules of the Geneva Conventions.

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RWANDA

ICRC CONDUCTING LARGEST-EVER OPERATION FOR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

The task is unspectacular but vital. Since the end of June last year the ICRC, in cooperation with UNICEF, UNHCR and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, has been registering tens of thousands of young children abandoned or lost while on the move in Rwanda and neighbouring countries. The ultimate aim of the operation, which is time-consuming and requires large numbers of staff, is to reunite the children with their families. "What we are doing in Rwanda", said Coraline de Wurstemberger, deputy head of the Africa sector at the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency, "constitutes the biggest operation for unaccompanied minors in our history."

With the help of other humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children UK, some 37,000 children have been registered to date. The ICRC estimates that there are over 13,000 unaccompanied Rwandan children in Zaire and almost 11,000 in Rwanda itself. There are others in camps in Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda. Most of the children concerned are between the ages of two and eight. "At that age", remarked Ms de
Wurstemberger, "a child is too big to be carried on its mother's back, so has to walk on its own. Being so much smaller and weaker than an adult, it is easily left behind, swallowed up by the huge crowds of fleeing people."

By the end of November 1994, hundreds of children had already been reunited with their families. Although the ICRC was pleased to see that the process was gathering pace as the year drew to a close, the situation in the Great Lakes area remains precarious. "If the violence were to resume and people's movements were once again dictated by fear", Ms de Wurstemberger continued, "children might take to the roads once again. If they left the camps, we would lose track of them and all our efforts over the last few months would have been in vain."

Coraline de Wurstemberger, ICRC Geneva, tel. + +4122 730 2774

SOMALIA/SOMALILAND

ICRC UNDER PRESSURE AS FIGHTING INCREASES

Demands on ICRC medical assistance in Somalia have increased sharply in recent weeks as interclan clashes continue in the run-up to the UN withdrawal from the country.

In Mogadishu, rival Somali militiamen battled to gain control of the access route to the seaport. Fleeing civilians were caught in the crossfire and by Monday 2 January the number of wounded had reached 217. These clashes are the worst in the capital since Abgal gunmen overran areas in the Medina district controlled by forces loyal to General Aidid last month. At that time 20 people were killed in street fighting. In the past week, fighting has also erupted in Belet Huen between Hawadle militias and forces loyal to General Aidid's Somali National Alliance (SNA). Casualties are heavy and a number of wounded have reached the Keysaney hospital in Mogadishu North, run by the Somali Red Crescent. Casualties from the SNA forces are being treated in the Benadir and Digfer hospitals in Mogadishu South, which receives medical assistance from the ICRC.

In Somaliland, an upsurge in fighting in mid-November between troops loyal to the authorities and opposition forces caused some 150,000 people to flee their homes. The situation now appears much quieter, but President Egal's offer of peace talks has not yet produced any results. To date the ICRC has organized four flights to bring in 20,000 blankets and 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting for some 40,000 displaced families around the capital, Hargeisa. The supplies were distributed in close cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent.

The ICRC has had access to 122 people captured by the Somaliland authorities after the recent fighting, and arrangements are being finalized for visits to people held by the opposition.

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While continuing its emergency assistance programme in Bihac town in north-western Bosnia, the ICRC is also helping civilians returning to the nearby town of Velika Kladusa. "Four months doesn't seem like a long time, but a lot has happened", said a returning refugee as she trudged along a snow-covered street, balancing a heavy bundle of belongings on her head.

Despite the near-freezing temperatures, the people of Velika Kladusa have been streaming back into the area for several days now. Clinging to their children and their possessions, they are arriving from two refugee camps in neighbouring UNPA North in buses, trucks and even horse-drawn carts.

At least 20,000 people have now returned to Velika Kladusa. Most of the town's civilian population fled their homes during fighting in late August, and have spent the last four months sheltering either in farm buildings in Batnoga or in abandoned houses in Turanj.

"We are glad to be back, but there are many problems", explained the Director of the health centre. It's very cold and there is little fuel for heating. Water is also a problem, as is food." The ICRC has supplied the health centre with plastic sheeting, stoves, blankets, surgical materials and essential drugs. An ICRC water and sanitation engineer has also installed an emergency water supply system to provide the town with drinking water.

In Bihac town, where the situation continues to deteriorate in humanitarian terms, the ICRC is supplying emergency medical equipment to the hospital for the treatment of war wounded, and to first aid-posts. Chlorine has also been delivered to purify drinking water. However, there is still an urgent need to replenish stocks in order to continue assistance to the civilian population. The next convoy is planned for the coming days, in the hope that clearance will be obtained from all parties and that adequate security in the field will allow vital food and medical supplies to reach Bihac.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC OPERATION STEPPED UP

Humanitarian needs in Chechnya are considerable owing to the extensive destruction there and the displacement of some 400,000 civilians (260,000 in Chechnya itself, 100,000 in Ingushetia, 30,000 in Dagestan, 5,000 in Northern Ossetia and 5,000 in the Russian Federation).

On 10 and 11 January, the ICRC took in emergency supplies to the Railway Station Hospital, the only hospital in Grozny apparently still able to provide first aid. Casualties requiring surgery are being evacuated south to medical facilities in Urus Martan, Staryi Atagi, Gudermes and Shali. Others are sent to hospitals in Ingushetia (Sleptsovskaya) or Dagestan (Khasavyurt). The ICRC estimates that more than a thousand people have been admitted to hospital, including a large number of civilians. Since mid-November, delegates have distributed 12 tonnes of medical supplies to 17 hospitals, enough to treat about 2,500 casualties.

With the cold and the lack of water and electricity, living conditions for the displaced persons are particularly difficult. At present, the ICRC is distributing relief supplies to more than 15,000 people in the region.

Food and other basics (oil, soap, detergents) for distribution to 100,000 people are on their way to Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria).

The ICRC plans to step up its assistance steadily over the next few weeks, gradually extending it to some 400,000 needy people.

ICRC delegates also recently visited and registered a small number of Russian prisoners held by the Chechen forces. Negotiations for access to all people detained on both sides are currently under way.

The ICRC now has 13 delegates in the region, backed up by 30 local employees. By the end of January, it expects to have about 50 expatriate staff there.

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A FAILURE OF THE REVIEW CONFERENCE CAN BE MEASURED IN THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIMBS, LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

During the fourth and last meeting (Geneva, 9-20 January) of the group of governmental experts to prepare the Review Conference of the States party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, the International Committee of the Red Cross has reminded the participants of their high responsibility. "Every month which passes before the implementation of strict and effective controls on anti-personnel mines can be measured in the loss of hundreds of human limbs, lives and livelihoods", declared Mrs Louise Doswald-Beck, senior legal advisor at the ICRC.

The ICRC fears that the proposals being discussed at the preparatory meeting will not result in measures sufficiently effective to avoid further suffering. The most widely supported initiative currently under consideration would require that in principle anti-personnel mines should contain self-destruct mechanisms. However, this same proposal explicitly permits the continued production, sale and use of non-self-destruct mines for use in fenced and guarded minefields. Therefore "dumb mines" will continue to be available and the ICRC anticipates, with concern, that they will in practice be frequently used indiscriminately. "This use outside fenced and guarded areas is precisely what has had such devastating effects on civilian populations", the ICRC legal advisor deplored. A regime based on the use of self-destruct mines is, according to the ICRC, only likely to reduce casualties if the production, transfer and use of non-self-destruct mines is prohibited and if it is accompanied by stringent verification and sanctions.

The ICRC strongly believes that for humanitarian reasons the only effective solution to the tragedy of anti-personnel mines is their total prohibition and elimination. Other options being considered are likely to result in continued large-scale civilian casualties for many years to come.

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ICRC AND SWISS RED CROSS LAUNCH JOINT CAMPAIGN FOR VICTIMS OF FORGOTTEN CONFLICTS

The ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross inaugurated a campaign on 9 January for the victims of forgotten conflicts. The aim is to increase public awareness and to raise funds. "The media these days are able to talk about two or three conflicts at a time", said Peter Fuchs, the ICRC's Director General, at a press conference in Berne. "They forget the other thirty still continuing elsewhere, such as those in Afghanistan, Liberia and Angola".

Mr Fuchs also stressed the importance of rapid action as soon as hostilities start, while Hubert Bucher, Secretary General of the Swiss Red Cross, pointed out that reconstruction aid was
vital once they have ended. Both men observed that it is extremely difficult to obtain financing for humanitarian action to help the victims of conflicts forgotten by the international community. By joining forces in this campaign - the first such joint undertaking - the two organizations hope to double its effect within Switzerland.

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SRI LANKA

ICRC CONTRIBUTES TO PEACE EFFORT

The new year has brought a consolidation of the truce in Sri Lanka. On 6 January the government in Colombo announced that a cease-fire agreement had been signed with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the opposition movement. The agreement came into force two days later. Both sides agreed to set up a number of commissions, composed of government and LTTE representatives and chaired by foreign representatives, to supervise observance of the truce. The ICRC was asked to chair one of the commissions but responded that it did not possess the military expertise for such a task, as its mandate was primarily to promote respect for international humanitarian law. The delegation in Colombo nevertheless declared itself ready to assist the peace commissions, in particular by continuing to act as a neutral intermediary between the parties.

The ICRC has been present in Sri Lanka since 1989. By frequently facilitating exchanges of messages between the government and LTTE leaders, particularly in recent months, it has played an active part in establishing a dialogue for peace.

In 1994 the ICRC also helped to transport over 110,000 tonnes of vital supplies provided by the Sri Lankan government, including medicines, by ship to the Jaffna peninsula. It used the same method to convey the sick to hospital and to forward correspondence between members of separated families. In the course of their protection activities, ICRC delegates last year visited more than 2,400 people held in 357 places of detention.

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IRAQ

RENEWED CLASHES IN KURDISTAN

Despite the ceasefire agreed on 9 January by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), fighting between these two factions resumed on 13 January in and around Arbil. According to ICRC staff on the scene, at least 100 people were killed in the clashes. The inhabitants of some neighbourhoods were forced to flee their homes and one of the town's hospitals was hit by shellfire.

The four ICRC delegates currently in northern Iraq appealed to the warring parties to spare the civilian population and care for the wounded and for prisoners. ICRC staff in Arbil distributed emergency medical supplies to those of the town's hospitals able to treat casualties.

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BEYOND SURVIVAL
EMERGENCY AID PLANTS THE SEEDS OF SELF-RELIANCE

In recent years the ICRC has greatly expanded its emergency aid programmes for war victims. Emergency aid has definite limits - it merely enables the beneficiaries to survive from one day to the next - and it often encourages total dependence. Such assistance, food aid in particular, must therefore be accompanied by measures to foster self-reliance. While hostilities are still going on, ICRC agronomists and veterinarians work with local experts to ensure that livestock survive and crops are planted. Agricultural reconstruction is the theme of a new ICRC film entitled "Beyond Survival", which was filmed in Mozambique and Somalia.

War always has severe and lasting consequences for the civilian population. When people are forced to flee or prevented from sowing crops by fighting, the presence of mines or other threats to their safety, the cycle of food production is broken. Stocks are consumed or destroyed and food producers turn into aid recipients. The ICRC firmly believes that reconstruction projects should begin early, before the emergency itself ends. "Food aid creates dependence", explained Andreas Lendorff, head of the ICRC's Relief Division in Geneva. "So farmers must receive support as quickly as possible to resume their own production. And it's almost even more important that they should regain a sense of dignity."

The film shows how, while the large-scale relief operation was under way in Somalia, the ICRC was carrying out an anti-parasite and vaccination programme that treated over 10 million camels, cattle and sheep. This led to a spectacular increase in exports, the economic lifeline of Somalia's nomadic population. Whereas only 350,000 animals were sold abroad in 1992, the number soared in 1993 to 1.4 million, over three times as many. In Mozambique a seed distribution programme enabled entire regions to bring in harvests for the first time in years. The ICRC has meanwhile been able to hand over the programmes in both countries to other organizations.

For TV services: a Betacam (international sound) copy of "Beyond Survival" can be obtained from the ICRC's Press Division in Geneva: Tel. +41 22 730 2317

A 16-page brochure has been published on the same subject and is available from the ICRC's Press Division: Tel. +41 22 730 2317

CHECHNYA
PRESS BRIEFING IN GENEVA

Chechenya's hospitals, which have in recent days been treating hundreds of severely injured people, have enormous needs. The 400,000 Chechens who have fled the fighting to other parts of Chechnya and to neighbouring Daghestan and Ingushetia are poorly housed and suffering from the cold and a shortage of drinking water. ICRC delegates have carried out a detailed survey to assess their needs.
The results of the survey and the plan of action drawn up for the next six months will be presented at a press briefing at ICRC headquarters in Geneva on Thursday, 19 January. Jean-Marc Bornet, Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, will also inform journalists about the financial appeal to be launched by the ICRC that same day for its work in Chechnya.

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ICRC NEWS N°4 / 25 January 1995

CHECHNYA

ICRC LAUNCHES TRACING PROGRAMME

The ICRC has launched a tracing programme this week for Chechnya and the whole northern Caucasus. At present the civilian population in Chechnya has no means of communication, and contacts with displaced relatives inside Chechnya or who have fled to the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia and Daghestan are impossible. The ICRC has therefore started setting up a network for the exchange of family news. The delegates are coordinating their efforts with the civilian authorities of every district in Chechnya and with the local Red Cross/Red Crescent branches that collect and distribute the messages. Grozny is the only town there where this mail service cannot operate.

Given the precarious security conditions in Chechnya and the fact that most displaced people do not have a permanent address, delivery of the messages may prove difficult. The ICRC delegates are therefore encouraging people in the conflict zones to write messages to relatives settled outside Chechnya in order to reassure them of their fate. The families abroad will then be able to send replies to the addresses indicated on these messages, thus facilitating their distribution. The reaction of the population and the local authorities towards this humanitarian service is extremely positive. "Most people in Chechnya have lost contact with one or several members of their families", said tracing delegate Pascale Berry. In neighbouring Ingushetia and Daghestan the communication facilities (mail and telephone) are still working, so people there can communicate with the outside world.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

SIMULTANEOUS RELEASE OF PRISONERS: ICRC INSISTS ON FULFILMENT OF AGREEMENTS

Fifty detainees held by the Bosnian government side and fifty prisoners held by the Bosnian Serb side were released under ICRC auspices on 20 January 1995 in Sarajevo. ICRC delegates at the bridge between the two parts of the city distributed basic necessities such as winter clothing to the newly freed. Prior to their release the ICRC had conducted private interviews with all the detainees to ascertain that they were being handed over of their own free will.

This was the first major release of prisoners held by Bosnia-Herzegovina's warring parties since early October 1994. It was also a significant gesture of goodwill by the two parties concerned and a psychological boost to bilateral relations often characterized by distrust and even fear.

Under Article 8 of the Agreement on Complete Cessation of Hostilities signed on 31 December 1994, the parties undertook to work "continuously and simultaneously on
processes for the early release of persons detained in relation with the conflict, as well as for the provision and the cross-checking of all available information on persons unaccounted for”.

Independently of this last agreement, and in accordance with several other agreements signed between the conflicting parties since October 1992, the ICRC insists on gaining access to all places of detention and all detainees. None of the agreements has been fully implemented to date.

The ICRC regularly visits some 900 persons detained in connection with the conflict in Bosnia. In 1994, more than 2,000 detainees were released under ICRC auspices.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

NEW PLAN FOR SEED DISTRIBUTION

Over the past few weeks an ICRC agronomist has carried out an extensive survey in the former Yugoslavia to evaluate the civilian population's needs for seed. The ICRC plans to distribute seed this spring to 200,000 families in areas affected by the conflict and which are not supplied by other organizations. Distributions will take place in the Bihac enclave, western and eastern Bosnia (including the enclaves), Orasje and the United Nations Protected Areas. A total of 2,500 metric tonnes of seed will be required for this agricultural emergency programme.

Depending on climatic conditions, distributions will start in mid-February in the Mediterranean zone and end two months later in the mountainous areas. The ICRC will then complete its assistance by supplying preservation sets (sugar, concentrated vinegar and salt) to enable the families to store part of their produce for the next winter.

The survey was planned in full coordination with all international humanitarian agencies involved in seed distribution, the local agricultural authorities and the local Red Cross organizations.

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AFGHANISTAN

ESCALATION OF INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING IN KABUL

After several weeks of relative calm in Kabul, exceptionally heavy shelling resumed, causing many casualties among the city's population. In the densely populated district of Khair Khana alone, 98 wounded, 11 of whom subsequently died, were admitted to the two nearest hospitals during the night of 28 January. The following day, the Karte Seh hospital, one of the Afghan capital’s main surgical centres, was hit by a mortar shell. Five of the hospital staff were seriously wounded by shrapnel, and one of them, an ambulance driver, died of his injuries.

Artillery fire on the city has increased, affecting several densely populated districts such as Khair Khana and Bagi Zanana, where many displaced people have taken refuge. Over the last fortnight, the number of war wounded admitted to Kabul’s 10 main hospitals has risen from 283 to 385 a week. According to figures available to the ICRC, 89% of the victims of recent shelling were civilians, more than one third of them children.

In the face of this escalation, the ICRC has made representations to the belligerents and, in a document detailing the latest incidents and stressing their effects from the humanitarian standpoint, it has appealed to the leaders of the parties concerned to make every effort to spare civilians and their property.

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SOUTHERN LEBANON

FAMILY VISITS TO DETAINEES AT KHIAM

Ten people held at the Khiam detention centre in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon were allowed to receive visits from their families on 31 January. The ICRC organized the transport of four families from the Tyre region across the front line, while the other six families came from the area occupied by Israel.

Arrangements are being made for 20 families to visit Khiam every week. The ICRC delegation in Beirut has received a list of 240 people held in this detention centre, some of them for nearly ten years. The great majority of the detainees have never received visits from outside.

Despite the many representations it has made to the competent authorities since 1984 and the fact that these people come under the protection of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has been denied access to them.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC REITERATES REQUEST FOR HUMANITARIAN TRUCE

For the past two weeks security conditions in Grozny have prevented ICRC delegates from providing humanitarian assistance to the town, where thousands of civilians are literally trapped. The Geneva institution has again urged both parties to the conflict to conclude a humanitarian truce to enable the civilian population to leave the town and to evacuate the wounded and the dead. "Only a temporary truce will allow us to conduct an effective humanitarian operation in Grozny", explained Rolin Wavre, in charge of the ICRC office in Nazran.

The fighting has also affected civilians in other parts of Chechnya that can be reached by the delegates. The number of severely wounded is rising every day and at least 4,000 casualties have been registered in the hospitals the ICRC has been assisting in recent weeks.

"Although access to the victims in many parts of Chechnya is still possible our operation is suffering from the lack of security and a large number of administrative problems", emphasized Wavre. So far 30,000 civilians have received desperately needed relief items, including food, blankets, clothing and plastic sheeting. The next relief flight is scheduled for 7 February and will bring another 20 tonnes of medical supplies to the region.

The ICRC is pursuing its efforts to visit all prisoners according to its standard criteria, which include private talks with detainees. It has been allowed to conduct regular visits to 56 people held by the Chechen forces.

The ICRC currently has 51 expatriates, including 15 drivers, carrying out its operation in the northern Caucasus. Most of them are based in Nazran (Ingushetia), from where they carry out their daily missions into Chechnya.

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PERU/ECUADOR

ICRC APPEALS TO THE WARRING PARTIES

In a memorandum sent to the governments of Peru and Ecuador on 30 January, following several days of hostilities between the two countries in the region known as the Cordillera del Condor, the ICRC appealed to them to respect their humanitarian obligations. These obligations are laid down in the Geneva Conventions which, in the event of armed conflict, stipulate that States must care for the wounded and prisoners, respect the civilian population and civilian objects and allow ICRC delegates access to all victims of the conflict. The memorandum also reminds the two parties of the rules for behaviour by combatants in armed conflict.

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ICRC NEWS n° 6 / 9 February 1995

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP

At the invitation of Polish President Lech Walesa and Baron Maurice Goldstein, Chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee, the International Committee of the Red Cross took part in the ceremonies marking the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp on 27 January 1945.

The ICRC was represented by its President, Cornelio Sommaruga, accompanied by an ICRC Committee member, Liselotte Kraus-Gurny, and three staff members.

In attending the commemoration the ICRC wished to pay tribute to the victims of Nazi persecution whom it did not or could not protect. It also wanted to help preserve the memory of atrocities perpetrated during the Second World War, so that such heinous acts would never be committed again.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC OPENS OFFICE IN SHALI

For the first time since it began its operation in Chechnya, the ICRC has now established a permanent presence there. Its new office opened on 8 February in Shali, about 20 km south-east of Grozny. All the ICRC's activities in Chechnya had thus far been conducted from Nazran in Ingushetia by staff making daily missions into the republic. The ICRC also has offices in Nazran, Khasavyurt (Daghestan) and Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria), which is the main logistics base for its entire operation in the northern Caucasus. It currently has 50 expatriate staff working in the region, including some 20 National Society personnel seconded by the British, German, Finnish and Swedish Red Cross Societies.

Relief supplies flown in

Relief supplies have just been flown into the region on board two aircraft. The first was an ICRC-chartered flight which landed in Stavropol on 7 February with a consignment of 23 tonnes of emergency medical supplies. These will be delivered over the next few days to a dozen hospitals receiving regular ICRC support in the northern Caucasus.

The second aircraft, chartered by the Belgian Red Cross and carrying 17,000 blankets, 20,000 bars of soap and 60,000 candles placed at the ICRC's disposal, arrived in Rostov on 9 February. The consignment will be distributed to hospitals and displaced civilians.
ICRC visits 23 prisoners

On 2 February two ICRC delegates visited 23 prisoners held by the authorities of the Russian Federation. The visit was conducted in accordance with the ICRC’s customary procedures. The delegates had talks in private with all the prisoners who so wished and gave them the opportunity to write Red Cross messages to their families. The ICRC is continuing to make representations to the authorities concerned with a view to gaining access to all prisoners. So far its delegates have registered 56 Russian prisoners taken by the Chechen forces.

Further information: Eric Reumann, ICRC Nalchik, Sat. Tel. 00873 286 230, or Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, Tel. ++ 41 22 730 2317

SUDAN

NEW RISE IN CASUALTIES FOR LOKICHOKIO HOSPITAL

Renewed fighting in southern Sudan in December and January, especially in and around Kapoeta, has resulted in a heavy influx of war-wounded at the ICRC's surgical hospital in Lokichokio, northern Kenya. "Yesterday alone, we had 45 casualties arriving at the hospital", said Thomas Merkelbach, head of the ICRC sub-delegation in Lokichokio. "Most of the wounded get here by road and the ICRC has started to evacuate them by truck from areas close to the Sudanese border."

In January alone there were 305 new admissions. The ICRC has had to increase the hospital's capacity from 350 to 450 patients, with an extra 70 beds standing ready in a temporary emergency ward. "This is the largest number of war-wounded we have ever had to handle at the hospital", said John Good, the ICRC medical coordinator for Sudan. "We already have two surgical teams working flat out, performing between 20 and 30 operations a day, and we've had to ask for a third surgical team to cope with the continuing waves of casualties, as well as an additional operating theatre for the hospital."

The ICRC’s medical programme for southern Sudan includes the rehabilitation of Juba teaching hospital in cooperation with the Sudanese Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health. The ICRC also has an expatriate surgical team working there. A number of other hospitals and health posts in southern Sudan are likewise being assisted by the ICRC with medicines and other medical supplies, whilst primary health care and vaccination programmes are being run in the north of Bahr el Ghazal and Jonglei provinces.

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GENEVA-AFRICA: THE SCOURGE OF LANDMINES AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES

On 21 January in Geneva, the Group of Governmental Experts ended its final meeting to prepare for the Conference that will review the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The group made a series of recommendations designed to strengthen the rules governing use of landmines. The outcome of the group's deliberations received a mixed reaction at ICRC headquarters. As the body responsible for the implementation and development of international humanitarian law, the International Committee welcomed the group's recommendation that the current restrictions should apply in both international and internal armed conflicts, as well as the decision to include on the agenda of the Conference (to be held in Vienna from 25 September to 13 October) a proposal for a total ban on the use of blinding laser weapons.

However, the ICRC considers that the procedures and mechanisms proposed by the group to limit the suffering caused to civilians by anti-personnel landmines are both too complex and too weak. In fact, only the complete prohibition of landmines could put an end to what has become a large-scale human disaster. It is estimated that there are now more than 100 million such mines laid and waiting all over the world, nearly 30 million of them on the African continent alone. These devices claim between 1,000 and 2,000 victims a month, most of them civilians.

The ICRC therefore appeals to the States to ponder this question, in order to ensure the success of the Vienna Conference. In particular, it considers that States should at least accept that all mines used must, obligatorily and without exception, be detectable and fitted with self-destruct mechanisms.

To date, only 42 States have signed the 1980 Convention in its present form. To promote participation by a larger number of States, particularly in Africa, the ICRC is planning a series of four seminars, to be attended by representatives of all African governments, public figures and ICRC experts. The seminars will be prepared with the help of the Organization of African Unity and will be held in Addis Ababa (23-24 February and 11-12 April), Harare (2-3 March) and Yaounde (25-27 April).

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SOUTH AFRICA

FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS SALUTE ICRC

The ICRC's detention work in South Africa, spanning more than thirty years, was publicly acknowledged during a commemorative reunion of former political prisoners last weekend (11-12 February). Under the auspices of a recently created South African organization, Peace Visions, some 1,200 ex-prisoners gathered in Cape Town for a visit to Robben
Island, site of the notorious prison a few kilometres off the coast, where many of them had
been detained for years. There they were addressed by President Nelson Mandela and other
leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The ICRC was invited in recognition of its visits to prisoners in South Africa since 1963.
Leading the ICRC representatives was Committee member Jacques Moreillon who, as a
delegate during the 1970s, made a number of visits to South African jails.

Later, at a conference to discuss the prisoners' experiences and future uses for Robben
Island, Namibia's Minister of Mines and Energy, Mr Toivuya Toivu, himself a former
detainee, paid tribute to the ICRC for its work in improving prison conditions.

The ICRC is still active in South Africa, visiting prisoners and people held in police cells
and, in conjunction with the South African Red Cross Society, assisting victims of political
violence.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC OPENS OFFICE IN GROZNY

Taking advantage of the relative calm prevailing in Grozny after weeks of ground fighting
and aerial bombardment, an ICRC team went to the city on 11 and 13 February to assess
the needs of the population and open an office to coordinate the organization's activities
there. The delegates noted the scale of the destruction and the destitution and exhaustion of
the inhabitants, most of whom have lost everything and are now sheltering in ransacked
apartments, with smashed windows and no drinking water, heating or electricity.

Two of the city's hospitals have been completely destroyed. Two others have been
extensively damaged but should be put back into operation after delivery of the medicines,
surgical supplies and generators that the ICRC is preparing to send in. It will also repair
the sanitation system.

In the next few days, a convoy of five trucks should bring food parcels for the people of
Grozny to be distributed at four or five points in the northern part of the city.

For the first time, it has been possible to deliver 55 Red Cross messages and to collect a
further 22, thus enabling people who had lost touch with their loved ones to resume
contact.

The ICRC is working from its main base at Nalchik, in Kabardino-Balkaria. Offices have
also been opened in Nazran, Ingushetia, in Khasavyurt, Daghestan and in Shali, southern
Chechnya.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva
ICRC SEEKING ACCESS TO ALL PERSONS HELD
IN CONFLICT BETWEEN ECUADOR AND PERU

In accordance with its mandate, the ICRC is maintaining contact with both parties to the armed conflict between Ecuador and Peru with a view to obtaining notification of and access to all civilian internees and prisoners of war held by either side.

So far the ICRC has been notified of eight Ecuadorian civilians interned in Peru, six of whom have been visited by delegates.

The ICRC has made a further visit to two Peruvian POWs in Ecuador and is negotiating with the Ecuadorian authorities to gain access to two more prisoners notified.

The visits to civilian internees and POWs were carried out in accordance with the ICRC's customary procedures and the persons concerned were given the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families.

A large number of people have been displaced as a result of fighting in the border dispute between Ecuador and Peru in the Rio Cenepa area of the Marañon river basin, in the Condor mountain range. The ICRC, working together with the Peruvian and Ecuadorian Red Cross Societies, has begun assessing the most urgent needs of the displaced population.

There are an estimated 4,000 displaced persons in Ecuador. ICRC delegates and the Ecuadorian Red Cross have started evaluating emergency requirements among civilians in the provinces of Zamora and Loja. A preliminary survey has revealed a need for drinking water, medicines for health centres and basic sanitation facilities to cope with the influx of displaced people.

On 30 January the ICRC sent a memorandum to the two governments reminding them of the provisions of international humanitarian law and requesting access to POWs and civilian internees held in connection with the conflict, pursuant to its mandate under the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva
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SOMALILAND: ICRC ACTION IN A COMPLEX PATCHWORK OF CLANS

Since November 1994 a rebellion has been brewing in Somaliland, pitting the government forces of President Egal against the armed militia of the Idegale, one of the region's clans. Renewed tension has recently been observed around the town of Burao, stronghold of the Habar Yonis, who are allied with the Idegale, while the Arab clan has been drawn into the fighting on the government side. This conflict, as deadly as the one that has been raging in the south of the country, has caused the displacement of nearly 150,000 people. The ICRC went into action in December, distributing some 20,000 blankets and 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting to build temporary shelters.

In recent weeks, however, the fighting has moved away from Hargeisa and according to an ICRC field-survey team tens of thousands of people have been able to return home. To ensure their survival as the rainy season approaches, delegates will soon be providing 25,000 more blankets and 1,500 further rolls of plastic sheeting to the displaced people in the Idegale area, where the ICRC is the only humanitarian organization present. In addition, 5.2 tonnes of medical supplies have been furnished to health posts and hospitals on both sides.

ICRC delegates have also been able to visit and register the 235 rebels captured by government forces and, following an agreement in principle concluded with the Idegale leaders, the ICRC should soon have access to the several dozen government prisoners they are holding.

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RWANDA: SOWING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

Having helped more than 70,000 needy families, the ICRC's vast seed distribution programme in Rwanda will come to a close at the end of February. The programme has covered 18 communes, mostly in the south-west of the country, where families are especially vulnerable. Many lost everything during the conflict last year and some of those who fled are now returning home empty handed except for what they have received from the ICRC and other humanitarian relief agencies.

Each family is given 13 kg of bean, 2 kg of maize and 3 kg of soya seed, and a ration of maize, beans and oil so that the seed will not be eaten. More than 80% of the Rwandan population live from agriculture, and seed distributions are vital if these people are to become self-sufficient again.

The ICRC relief administrator, Konrad Fisler, who coordinates the distribution of this much-needed assistance in eight communes near the Burundi border, is pleased with the people's positive spirit: "We unload at the sites and oversee the distribution itself, but it is
the local farmers who work things out between themselves. The community is coming back
together again for the first time since the war ..."
During the previous distribution in January, the ICRC provided families with vegetable and
sorghum seed, as well as hoes. According to Hans Peter Giess, the ICRC agronomist on
the spot: "Now these people can support themselves and maybe our seed donations will
serve as an incentive for the displaced population to return home from the camps!"

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: A RAY OF HOPE IN BIHAC
AS ICRC BRINGS FAMILIES TOGETHER AGAIN

The agony of waiting was finally over last week for the relatives of ten children transferred
from Bihac under the ICRC's family reunification programme. The children, aged between
3 and 15, had been separated from their parents as a result of the conflict in the former
Yugoslavia and had since been living with relatives either in Bihac town itself or in the
surrounding area.
The ICRC attempted to transfer many of the children last November but did not succeed
because of hazardous security conditions. The last successful family reunification from
Bihac took place on 29 September 1994.
For one man, the event was particularly special. His wife had given birth to her second
child in Bihac in 1992 but had been forced to leave her newborn baby and older daughter
with grandparents, as she feared for their safety when she left the area. "It was terrible for
my wife and me to leave our children behind - we haven't been the same since", he
explained. "I can hardly believe that I am taking them home with me." Working on a
case-by-case basis, the ICRC tries to reunite families separated because of the conflict. Last
year, almost 1,800 people rejoined their relatives thanks to this programme.

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THE ICRC IN 1994
IMPRESSIVE FIGURES

For the ICRC 1994 was quite different from 1993, as can be seen from the figures below. These figures call for some comment. Owing to the many crises in the world the ICRC had to increase its field staff, and recruitment reached a record high. A total of 785 Swiss delegates worked in 53 countries alongside 200 expatriates seconded by National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. The number of locally recruited employees and specialists also rose. Conversely, staff at headquarters in Geneva decreased slightly from 664 to 640. The volume of the Central Tracing Agency’s work nearly doubled: in 1994 the Agency handled some 7.7 million Red Cross messages (a large proportion in connection with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia) and reunited 4,149 people with their families. ICRC delegates saw fewer detainees than in 1993 (99,020 as against 143,610), but visited more places of detention (2,470 as against 2,367) in a larger number of countries (58 as against 47). The ICRC’s initial budget for 1995, which amounted to 701 million Swiss francs, was already increased by Sfr 55 million in January to cope with the conflict in Chechnya. This brings the budget for the current year to Sfr 756 million.

1. PRESENCE

The ICRC maintains a permanent presence in 53 countries, distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ICRC also has a delegation in New York.

2. PERSONNEL

The average number of ICRC staff is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate staff</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Society personnel</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local employees</td>
<td>8,271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 9,887

3. FINANCE
The ICRC's total expenditure in 1994 for activities carried out at headquarters and in the field amounted to Sfr 742 million (US$ 518 million). The institution's budget for 1995 totals Sfr 756 million (US$ 539 million).

4. VISITS TO DETAINEES

Last year ICRC delegates visited 99,020 detainees in 2,470 places of detention in 58 countries.

5. CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

In 1994, the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) succeeded in establishing the whereabouts of 5,143 people for whom tracing requests had been filed.

The CTA arranged for the exchange of 7,721,650 messages between members of families split up by conflict, disturbances or tension. It also enabled 4,149 people to rejoin their families.

6. RELIEF

The ICRC distributed more than 167,000 tonnes of relief supplies (food, clothing, blankets, tents, etc.) in 45 countries last year, for a total value of Sfr 156 million (US$ 120 million), including medical assistance worth Sfr 20 million (US$ 15 million).

7. SURGERY/ORTHOPAEDICS

Surgery

The ICRC had surgical staff working in five hospitals, which admitted some 7,300 patients. ICRC teams performed 13,200 surgical operations over the year and a further 6,733 people were given outpatient care.

Five other hospitals received technical and financial assistance from the ICRC. This enabled them to provide treatment for 17,331 patients, to perform 33,645 surgical operations and to give outpatient care to around 70,000 people.

Orthopaedic projects

The ICRC was involved in 30 orthopaedic projects in 17 countries. More than 7,489 amputees were fitted with prostheses and 2,029 people with other orthopaedic appliances.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ICRC PROVIDES FOR HOT MEALS DAILY IN BIHAC TOWN

Since 1 March, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been supplying food for a community kitchen for about 3,000 of Bihac town’s most vulnerable residents. "The ICRC has undertaken to provide the local Red Cross with the necessary ingredients to ensure that balanced and nutritional meals are available seven days a week for those in most desperate need", said Susanne Fischbach, the head of the ICRC office in Bihac.

Working in difficult conditions, it takes the team of local Red Cross volunteers several hours each day to prepare the meals in a hotel kitchen damaged during shelling almost a year ago. Only one electric hot plate is still working, so wood stoves have been installed, but there is insufficient ventilation to clear the smoke. "Our work would be much easier if we had better equipment", commented one of the cooks, "but the kitchen is clean and that is the main thing".

At one of the distribution centres where beneficiaries come to collect their meals, a middle-aged woman solemnly thanked the volunteers who hand over her rations. "I am also collecting for my mother and my aunt", she explained, "we rely very much on this kitchen as we have virtually nothing else."

The ICRC, which has been present in Bihac on a permanent basis for more than two and a half years, currently has four expatriates and 17 local staff working in Bihac town. Since January, ICRC convoys have regularly brought in large quantities of food for the civilian population in the Bihac enclave, as well as items needed to maintain water supplies and sanitation.

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CHECHNYA

TRACING AGENCY LAUNCHES "OPERATION TELEGRAM"

For the past two months the civilian population of Grozny has been cut off from contact with the outside world. Now, however, those left in Grozny, most of whom are of Russian origin, have the opportunity to send Red Cross messages. Every evening Armin Gruber and other ICRC delegates bring some 200 messages back to Nalchik, the ICRC's logistics base in the northern Caucasus. "But how can we expedite these messages", asked Gruber, "since by normal mail from Nalchik you have to wait at least four weeks for a reply? That's long, too long, for people who have been out of touch with their loved ones these many weeks".

For the first time, therefore, the Tracing Agency has been making systematic use of telegrams with the message "your relatives in Grozny have sent a message for you. Please call the International Committee of the Red Cross in Nalchik at the following number: ...".
About 100 telegrams are sent every day, mostly to the southern part of the Russian Federation. "The Nalchik post office can't handle more than that", said Gruber. To be sure, the recipients are usually alarmed at first since in Russia a telegram generally brings bad news. But relief comes with their call to Nalchik. They can then dictate a reply, which will be delivered in Grozny by the ICRC the following day.
The telephones ring all day at the ICRC delegation in Nalchik with the sixty-or-so replies to the telegrams. "The results have been satisfactory", says Gruber, "and for the time being we'll keep on doing it this way. Later, when all those still without news have managed to contact their families, we'll revert to the traditional system of sending the messages through local branches of the Red Cross or by mail."
In the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Daghestan, the messages from southern Chechnya are forwarded through Red Cross/Red Crescent services and also with the help of the local authorities. Several hundred have been delivered in this way.

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EQUATORIAL GUINEA

RED CROSS MOBILIZES TO HELP COMPATRIOTS EXPELLED FROM GABON

Since the Gabonese government's decision on 15 February to demand the departure of tens of thousands of foreigners working illegally in the country, Equatorial Guinea has had to deal with a massive influx of its returning nationals. With financial assistance from the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross, the Equatorial Guinea Red Cross Society immediately launched a programme to aid the returnees. It organized transport from three border posts to towns and villages in the country's interior and chartered a ship for crossings to the island of Malabo. It also set up emergency facilities to distribute bread, sardines and water. By its prompt action, the Equatorial Guinea Red Cross eased the effects of a situation that was traumatic for thousands.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION FOR 210,000 VULNERABLE FAMILIES

For the third consecutive year, the ICRC is helping families living in parts of the former Yugoslavia affected by the fighting to start growing their own food again. From February to mid-April, some 3,800 tonnes of agricultural supplies are being distributed (mostly seed potatoes, cereal and vegetable seed, pesticides, fertilizers, basic farming implements, preserving agents and, in colder areas, greenhouse-construction materials). Priority is being given to the most vulnerable families - this year some 210,000 will receive such assistance - living in UN-protected areas (UNPAs) in parts of Herzegovina and in western, central and eastern Bosnia. Several agricultural collectives will also receive seed in order to provide local medical and social welfare institutions with food.

The ICRC has been coordinating this work with other humanitarian organizations engaged in similar activities in the former Yugoslavia, in order to avoid duplication of aid, inappropriate supplies or inefficient utilization of meagre resources.

The programme, which will cost 5.8 million Swiss francs in all, is being financed by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and the Austrian Red Cross. It requires relatively complex planning as it must take into consideration the agricultural and ecological diversity of the various regions, as well as the differing needs of people living in urban, semi-urbanized or rural environments. An assessment carried out by an ICRC agronomist of the 1993 and 1994 programmes yielded useful lessons that have been taken into account in this year's distribution.

Though the ICRC has already carried out similar emergency rehabilitation programmes in connection with a number of conflicts, particularly in Africa (Angola, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan), it had practically no experience in this type of work in Europe. However, it has been observed that large-scale food distributions in the former Yugoslavia have negative side-effects similar to those seen in developing countries, since they tend to encourage dependence on aid.

As in previous years, an ICRC agronomist is monitoring the programme, which will perceptibly improve nutrition by next winter.

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RWANDA

ICRC ASSISTING PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL IN KIGALI
When a country is devastated by armed conflict, psychiatric patients are often the very last in line to receive assistance, but this has not been the case in Rwanda. With support from the ICRC, the Ndera psychiatric hospital, the only one of its kind in the country, was able to reopen in August of last year.

There is an overwhelming need for hospitals such as Ndera. More than one hundred people are currently being treated there, and new patients are admitted every week. Most of the patients are suffering from severe post-war trauma, manic depression and hallucinations. One of the five children currently under treatment said that she constantly saw men with machetes running after her. Other patients were already ill before last year's events, but their traumatic experiences and lack of medical attention while the hospital was closed has aggravated their condition.

The patients receive tranquillizers which in most cases enable them to return to a relatively normal existence. But successful treatment also creates problems. Many patients have lost their families, and have nowhere to go and nobody to return home to. "Of course it is no solution to keep stable patients here," said ICRC field nurse Marcelle Baltzinger, "but for the time being we have no other choice".

What needs to be done is to rebuild the seriously damaged chronic patients' ward where stable cases will then be able to lead a more independent life. This should soon become possible as a National Red Cross Society will be taking over the rehabilitation and management of the hospital, under the auspices of the ICRC.

Although conditions are still rudimentary, there is a marked improvement in the patients' lives once they are transferred to Ndera. Because of their confused and sometimes violent behaviour, many of them arrive in handcuffs, with infected wounds. "In time - and with fresh food and medication provided by us - they will be helped to gradually resume a tolerable existence with less anguish and fear", said Marcelle Baltzinger.

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AFGHANISTAN

FIGHTING TAKES HEAVY TOLL

The civilian population of Kabul is once again bearing the brunt of the fighting that has been raging in the Afghan capital since 6 March. Indiscriminate bombing and shelling have left many dead or wounded. The casualties include an Afghan employee of the ICRC and a staff member of the Afghan Red Crescent, killed on 10 and 15 March respectively. Some areas of the city have been almost completely destroyed, forcing the inhabitants to leave.

Between 4 and 17 March Kabul's ten main hospitals admitted 1,636 wounded, a figure as high as that recorded by ICRC delegates in January 1994, when the city was being pounded by intensive bombing and artillery fire. The hospitals in Herat and Shindan have also treated many casualties. Throughout the clashes the ICRC has continued to provide emergency medical supplies to all hospitals receiving the war-wounded. The ICRC's surgical hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, is almost filled to capacity, having admitted 150 patients this month.

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ECUADOR/PERU

AFTERMATH OF BORDER DISPUTE

Since the outbreak last January of the border dispute between Ecuador and Peru, the ICRC has been playing an active role on both sides. On 1 March the authorities of the two countries released two Ecuadorian prisoners of war held in Peru and seven Peruvian POWs interned in Ecuador. ICRC delegates had talks in private with each of the prisoners, in accordance with the institution's customary working procedures, and the men were then repatriated under the ICRC's auspices. So far delegates have had private interviews with about 30 civilian internees on both sides. Not all of them have been released to date.

Working with the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Red Cross, the ICRC has assessed the needs of about 10,000 displaced people on either side of the border. Emergency aid and medicines have been supplied for the displaced in Ecuador.

The hostilities came to an end with the signing of a cease-fire agreement in Montevideo on 28 February, under the auspices of the four guarantor nations of the Rio Protocol of 1942. On 15 March the ICRC handed over to the warring parties a memorandum and a plan of action aimed at resolving outstanding humanitarian issues - mainly problems concerning civilian internees and persons reported missing, and the question of mortal remains. A second memorandum, specifically relating to landmines, was attached to the document,
reminding the parties of the relevant provisions of international law and requesting that they take practical measures such as the marking of minefields or mined areas and the neutralization of active mines.

When the conflict broke out the ICRC immediately contacted the authorities of both countries. Its regional delegate based in Brasilia went to the Ecuadorian capital Quito. In Peru the ICRC has had a permanent delegation in Lima since 1984, to handle matters arising from the internal conflict in the country. On 30 January the ICRC addressed a memorandum to the two parties asking them to comply with the provisions of international humanitarian law, and in particular to care for the wounded, respect the civilian population and authorize its delegates to visit prisoners of war.

The armed conflict between Peru and Ecuador broke out in the Rio Cenepa area of the Marañon river basin, as result of a territorial dispute in the northern part of the Condor mountain range. A previous border dispute between the two countries in 1941 was settled in 1942 when both parties signed the Rio Protocol, guaranteed by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States. Since then, several clashes of varying intensity have taken place in the area, in particular in 1981 and 1991.

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SRI LANKA

PRISONERS RELEASED IN JAFFNA

Sixteen detainees held by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) were released on 18 March 1995. The detainees concerned, 15 policemen held since June 1990 and one soldier captured in July 1991, were handed over to the ICRC in Jaffna and were transferred to the Palali military base the same day. The Sri Lankan authorities then flew them on to Colombo. An ICRC doctor accompanied the freed detainees on their journey from Jaffna to the capital where their families, informed of their release by the ICRC, were waiting for them at the airport.

The ICRC has been conducting a large-scale humanitarian operation in Sri Lanka since 1989. Efforts have focused on the protection of detainees and of civilians in conflict areas. In 1994, ICRC delegates visited more than 2,400 detainees in 357 places of detention throughout the country, including persons held by the LTTE. The Sri Lankan government released a large number of the people it was holding in 1994, but at the end of January 1995 the ICRC was still visiting over 800 detainees.

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LIBERIA
HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS RESUME FOR CIVILIANS

For the first time in six months, the ICRC has been able to conduct humanitarian operations outside the Liberian capital Monrovia. Working together with the Liberian Red Cross, this month it has distributed non-food assistance to 3,447 families arriving from Nimba and Bong counties in the northern and north-eastern part of the country. According to Christian Brunner, head of the ICRC delegation in Monrovia, "it appears that these civilians have fled from areas devastated by uncontrolled armed bands".

For the past few weeks groups of destitute people have been arriving in the town of Buchanan in the zone held by ECOMOG troops, creating an emergency situation to which humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC have responded: Médecins sans frontières-France has set up a reception camp, and the ICRC has distributed blankets, cooking sets, clothing and soap. Poor security conditions had made it impossible to work for civilians in this part of the ECOMOG-held zone since September 1994.

According to the displaced people, hunger is no longer a problem, since the manioc and rice harvests seem to have been good. However, in view of the destruction of medical facilities and the approach of the rainy season, serious health problems are feared in the weeks ahead.

The ICRC is continuing to furnish medical supplies to five hospitals in Monrovia and one in Buchanan.

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Tel. +41 22 730 2265
The President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, will visit the southern Caucasus from 3 to 11 April 1995. He will meet the highest authorities in Yerevan (Armenia), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Baku (Azerbaijan) to discuss humanitarian issues of ongoing concern in the area.

Georgia: landmines cause endless suffering

The situation in humanitarian terms continues to be critical in Georgia and Abkhazia. Over the past few months the ICRC has carried out a winter programme for the most vulnerable people in both Georgia and Abkhazia and in the security zone between them. Relief supplies have been distributed to 100,000 displaced people in the Zugdidi and Tsalenjika districts within the security zone. In Abkhazia 60,000 people received ICRC assistance in 1994. Each month 120 family food parcels are distributed to the needy through the local Red Cross. The ICRC continues to support 13 community kitchens in Sukhumi, Gulripsh, Tkvarcheli and elsewhere.

The region is also infested with anti-personnel landmines. The ICRC has recently opened two orthopaedic workshops, one in Tbilisi and the other in Gagra (Abkhazia).

Since the onset of the crisis in Georgia, traditional means of communication between Georgia and Abkhazia have been cut. The ICRC has therefore set up a Red Cross message network, which handled 72,000 messages in 1994.

So far the ICRC has not obtained access to all persons detained in connection with the conflict or with internal events. In 1994, delegates registered 120 detainees and assessed their conditions of detention, providing assistance when necessary.

Armenia and Azerbaijan: overwhelming needs

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been faced with new problems since the recent closing of the border between the Russian Federation and the Transcaucasian countries owing to the armed conflict in Chechnya. More than 1.2 million displaced people and refugees are currently living in the region. In Azerbaijan, the ICRC is providing assistance mainly to displaced people living near the front lines. In close coordination with the Azerbaijan Red Crescent, it is helping the most vulnerable groups (the elderly, orphans and war widows) in nine districts. In Armenia, the American Red Cross, in cooperation with the Armenian Red Cross, is engaged in a programme set up under ICRC auspices to help 7,500 families living on a strip of land running more than 200 kilometres along the border with Azerbaijan. As in Azerbaijan, the ICRC is also assisting the most vulnerable groups.
As the number of war casualties has declined, the frequency of mine-blast injuries has become increasingly evident. The ICRC is tackling this problem by introducing an orthopaedic programme to fit amputees with artificial limbs.

The ICRC has stepped up its representations to the parties concerned with a view to gaining access to all combatants and civilians held in connection with the conflict or internal political crises. In 1994, delegates visited more than 400 persons detained on account of the Nagornoy Karabakh conflict.

**Nagornoy Karabakh: water-supply programme**

In Nagornoy Karabakh the ICRC is carrying out a programme to restore water-supply systems. Several hospitals have already been reconnected to sources of safe water.

The Central Tracing Agency has handled more than 7,000 Red Cross messages in connection with the Nagornoy Karabakh conflict.

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Fact sheets with further details may be obtained from the ICRC Press Division

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

**ICRC PROVIDES EMERGENCY AID AS FIGHTING RESUMES**

The ICRC has launched an emergency medical aid programme following new outbreaks of fighting in the Tuzla and Travnik regions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Medical supplies and, whenever necessary, food aid have been provided on both sides of the front lines to the main hospitals in Tuzla, Travnik, Zenica, Banja Luka and Bijeljina, and to field hospitals in Gradacac, Maoca and Knesevo.

The fighting has forced about 1,600 civilians to flee from the Mount Vlasic area (near Travnik) to the town of Knesevo, 45 kilometres south-east of Banja Luka. Apart from the medical assistance, ICRC teams have provided relief supplies to the most needy displaced civilians who have taken refuge in temporary shelters. Six tonnes of food, along with blankets, children's clothing and hygiene items, have already been distributed with the help of the local Red Cross in Knesevo.

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SOMALIA

A HELPING HAND FOR RETURNEES IN THE JUBA VALLEY

For some time the communities in the Juba valley in southern Somalia have been neglected or forgotten by the international community and NGOs, which have increasingly focused their attention on areas of the country considered to be more secure. Soon after the civil war began in 1991, most of the local population fled the fighting and settled in refugee camps near the border in Kenya. Many of these camps were closed in 1994 and people started to trickle back to their homes. As the situation in the Juba valley has become more stable, the numbers returning have steadily increased. But resettlement has not been easy.

For many returnees the main problem has been getting home from Doble, the Somali border town with Kenya. Because of insecurity and lack of transportation, the limited supplies they are given when they leave the camps are often used up before they reach their destination.

According to Fred Grimm, head of the ICRC's Somalia delegation in Nairobi, "Many families have to walk great distances back to their homes, a journey which in some cases can take over a month. They arrive there with nothing, so our idea is to give them a helping hand".

Aid distributions began on 24 March for families living near Doble, Afmahdu, Kismayo and villages on both sides of the Juba river. In the next two weeks about 30,000 families will receive seed (including vegetable kits), mosquito netting, fishing tackle and plastic sheeting. Almost 84 tonnes of relief supplies will be flown to Kismayo and Marere or taken by truck across the Kenyan border to Doble and Afmahdu. The aid will be given not only to returnees, but also to those who remained in the area during the fighting.

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One year after the genocide began in Rwanda in April 1994, the ICRC is continuing to provide assistance and protection for vulnerable members of the country’s population. A total of 120 delegates and about 800 Rwandan staff are currently based in Kigali (main delegation), Butare, Gikongoro, Cyangugu, Kibuye, Kibungo, Gisenyi and Byumba. With a budget for Rwanda of 53 million US dollars for 1995, the ICRC is engaged in a variety of programmes, including protection of detainees, reunification of families separated by the conflict, restoration of water supplies and medical facilities and distribution of food and seed.

"We will continue to monitor the situation in the country and adjust our efforts should new humanitarian needs arise", said ICRC head of delegation Jean-François Sangsue. The situation in Rwanda’s 13 prisons and more than 100 other places of detention is still extremely critical. ICRC delegates are doing their utmost to improve the appalling conditions endured by more than 30,000 detainees, distributing emergency supplies of food and water, carrying out sanitation work and providing support for the prison health services.

"In the coming months we shall do everything possible to speed up the rate of family reunifications. More than 1,000 children have already rejoined their families and 57,000 others have been entered in the ICRC database and are waiting to be reunited with their relatives. Furthermore, we shall take a careful look at the results of the next harvest in June and July and are ready to continue our seed programme if it turns out that some farmers have not yet regained self-sufficiency", added Sangsue.

Today, one year after conflict broke out in the country, the situation in material terms appears to have stabilized, as most Rwandans now have access to food and clean water.

In psychological terms the Rwandan population is still traumatized. "Rwanda has now entered a period of remembrance where people will relive the tragic events of last year", concluded Jean-François Sangsue. "It will be a time filled with grief and distress. We can only hope that the collective anguish will recede and that human dignity in this country will be respected in times to come".

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CHECHNYA

ICRC OPERATIONAL IN ALL AREAS EXCEPT THE SOUTH-EAST

The ICRC’s operation on behalf of conflict victims in Chechnya is being implemented according to the plan set out in its emergency appeal for 55 million Swiss francs launched on 19 January 1995. To date, more than 250,000 people, including 70,000 residents and displaced people in the capital, Grozny, have received aid distributed by ICRC delegates. There are still a number of problems, however: in southern Chechnya, which is controlled by pro-Dudayev forces, ICRC assistance is merely trickling in. "It is unfortunate that security problems and administrative difficulties with the authorities of the Russian Federation have still not been resolved to our complete satisfaction", said Jean-Marc Bornet, ICRC Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, on his return from a mission to the region.

The needs of the victims of the Chechen conflict are still overwhelming. Some 560,000 people, many of whom are still in the south-east of the republic, are in need of medical and food aid. The ICRC has had to close down its office in the south-eastern town of Shali for security reasons, and its work is being carried out by a mobile team based in Noyayurt, Dagestan. The medical situation is particularly critical, but the medicines and emergency medical supplies which the ICRC distributed last week to the hospitals in Shatoi and Noyayurt will be enough to treat about 900 casualties. The ICRC has still not managed to bring any food into the area.

In the town of Grozny, 70,000 people have already received assistance from the ten ICRC delegates based there. The sanitation programme has now become a priority, since all the capital’s water supply facilities have been destroyed. Twelve ICRC trucks are bringing in 150,000 litres of water a day from a spring located 50 km away from the city. Grozny’s inhabitants are also making use of the Red Cross message network to try and re-establish contact with relatives with whom they have lost touch as a result of the conflict. A total of 11,000 family messages have been exchanged to date.

Following recent fighting in south-eastern Chechnya, the flow of displaced persons has increased both inside the republic and in Dagestan. Additional food and non-food aid from the ICRC warehouse in Khasavyurt is on its way and will be distributed to about 35,000 people.

In Ingushetia the ICRC’s operation, which is being run in close cooperation with the local Red Cross, has been stepped up to assist 112,000 displaced persons.

Although the ICRC has received authorization from both warring parties to visit the prisoners they are holding, it is continuing to make representations in order to ensure that it does have access to these prisoners. So far its delegates have carried out visits in accordance with standard ICRC procedures to only 97 Russians detained by the Chechen forces and to 175 Chechens held by the Russian Federation forces.

Further information: Jean-Marc Bornet, Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia,
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ICRC ASSISTS NEWLY DISPLACED POPULATION
BIHAC ENCLAVE

An ICRC team distributed emergency relief and medical supplies in Velika Kladusa last week after a recent outbreak of fighting in the area north of the Bihac enclave brought new arrivals of displaced persons and war-wounded. Around 700 displaced people have gathered in and around Velika Kladusa after fleeing villages near the front line, which lies south of the town.

The ICRC immediately supplied 500 blankets and 1,000 individual food parcels and household rations to the local Red Cross in Velika Kladusa for distribution to the newly displaced population. Health facilities were given emergency medical supplies to treat the war-wounded.

Blankets and food rations have also been handed out to help cope with the influx of displaced people in the Vrnograc area, south-east of Velika Kladusa, which is located close to the front line.

The ICRC has been assisting Velika Kladusa's inhabitants since the first refugees returned to their homes from UNPA North last December. Relief items, seed to enable the population to grow and store their own food, medical supplies and an emergency water distribution system are among the aid provided by the ICRC. A public kitchen will soon be opened and will provide one meal a day for 1,500 people.

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AID FOR FRONT-LINE VILLAGES IN TUZLA AREA

On 1 and 2 April ICRC delegates carried out a survey of humanitarian needs in two areas of the Tuzla region severely affected by the recent outbreak of fighting between Bosnian government forces and the Bosnian Serb army. The two areas in question - Tojsici and Celic - had been closed to all international organizations for the past two weeks.

In Tojsici, the ICRC immediately distributed urgently needed assistance including 600 kg of tarpaulin, 10 rolls of plastic sheeting, nails and 400 blankets to the local Red Cross to help build shelters in six front-line villages where 50 houses had been damaged by recent shelling.

In Celic, a remote municipality which is surrounded by 40 km of front line, the local population warmly welcomed the ICRC team. In the coming week delegates will provide
individual food parcels and detergent for thousands of displaced people from seven exposed villages who have been forced to move away from the front line.

The ICRC has regularly been providing hospitals and clinics in the Tuzla area with surgical supplies since it established a presence there in November 1992.

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TURKEY/IRAQ
FIRST ICRC SURVEYS IN TURKISH-CONTROLLED NORTHERN IRAQ

In the past few days the ICRC has carried out several surveys of the situation in the part of Iraqi Kurdistan which has been under Turkish army control since 20 March. Two delegates went to Zakho, a town close to the Turkish border, to meet representatives of the Turkish government, and afterwards travelled toward Kani Masi and Amadiyah along two roads which run parallel to the border. Their first reports describe villages deserted by the population to avoid the arrival of Turkish troops. In the province of Amadiyah alone, some 500 families have headed south toward Sarsang and found shelter among the local population.

One of the ICRC’s concerns is for the people of certain villages cut off from the outside world by the military operations now under way. Delegates are keeping in contact with the Turkish authorities in Zakho to ensure that supplies can be delivered to these villages and that any necessary medical evacuations can be carried out.

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GHANA
THOUSANDS FLEE RENEWED FIGHTING

In mid-March 1995, violent ethnic fighting once again erupted in north-eastern Ghana. South of the town of Bimbila, clashes between Konkomba and Nanumba groups left 150 dead and some 1,300 homes in a dozen villages destroyed. Nearly 15,000 people fled from the area to seek refuge in neighbouring towns. The ICRC immediately purchased pump fuel and disinfectant to ensure a supply of vitally needed drinking water.

Feeling that rapid action should be taken to encourage the displaced people to return home as soon as possible, the ICRC, with the help of Ghana Red Cross Society staff, is going to launch a non-food relief (plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, etc.) and medical aid programme in order to meet the urgent needs of both ethnic communities.

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RWANDA

WOUNDED FROM KIBEHO CAMP EVACUATED TO BUTARE

On 23 April the ICRC and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) began to evacuate to Butare people who had been wounded the previous day in Kibeho camp. Some 200 patients have already been admitted to the hospital run by Médecins sans frontières (MSF) and to the university teaching hospital in Butare, where a wing has been turned over to the ICRC and placed under the protection of the the Red Cross emblem. Two surgical teams have been working there since 24 April and about 100 casualties are receiving treatment.

Kibeho camp is now almost completely deserted, with only upwards of 2,000 people still there. The ICRC is trying to provide these remaining occupants with food and water, and at the same time to act as a neutral intermediary between them and the Rwandan Patriotic Army so that they can be evacuated. Some 200 children abandoned in the camp have been taken by the ICRC to Butare.

Fresh exodus in southern Rwanda

The other camps for displaced people in southern Rwanda are deserted too. Before the events of last week there were an estimated 280,000 civilians living in the camps. At present these people are scattered throughout the region, making the role of the humanitarian relief agencies as crucial as ever. On 25 April the ICRC distributed food to about 35,000 people along the roads and in some villages.

Prison conditions still alarming

The ICRC remains deeply concerned about the situation in the country's prisons. Before the camps began to empty, 35,000 detainees were being held in conditions of extreme overcrowding. The detainees have been able to survive with the assistance of the ICRC, which is supplying them with water, food and medicines.

In view of the current circumstances, the ICRC has decided to strengthen its team of delegates in the field.

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CHECHNYA

VAST HUMANITARIAN NEEDS
While increasing efforts are being made to bring about a return to normal life in the northern and central areas of Chechnya, the civilian population continues to suffer great hardship.

Large numbers of people have been arriving over the last few days in the main city, Grozny. Grozny's population has now risen to over 200,000, as compared with fewer than 100,000 in mid-January at the height of the fighting there. The local infrastructure is far from adequate: while gas lines remain open in most neighbourhoods, there is no running water in the city or in villages within a 50-kilometre radius. Three ICRC sanitation engineers are helping to restore the water supply, hoping to avert the spread of disease as the weather turns warmer.

In south-western Chechnya, where fighting is still going on, five to six thousand people have fled the small town of Bamut in the last few days to seek refuge in surrounding areas. Some of these displaced people have arrived in the village of Arshty, where the ICRC distributed food to residents on 31 March. At present, owing to the difficulty of gaining access to the area controlled by Chechen militias, the ICRC is unable to enter either Bamut or Arshty.

Food aid has been distributed under the ICRC's relief programme to more than 400,000 people so far, mainly in Ingushetia and Daghestan but also in Grozny.

The ICRC intends to scale down its tracing activities in Chechnya now that post offices are beginning to reopen in Grozny and the inhabitants can again use normal means of communication. The exceptional measures taken during the last few months whereby messages were sent by telex and telephone will thus come to an end. However, the ICRC will continue to forward family messages to destinations abroad. A total of 20,000 Red Cross messages have been exchanged to date, mainly between Grozny and surrounding areas.

ICRC delegates have conducted visits to some 400 prisoners on both sides of the conflict. In recent weeks, however, owing to difficulties of access in southern Chechnya, they have been unable to repeat their visits to Russian prisoners held by pro-Dudayev forces.

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RWANDA

ICRC INCREASES STAFF FOR PRISON VISITS

The protection of detainees has become the most urgent task for the ICRC in Rwanda, where it has registered more than 36,000 people in 150 different places of detention. Inmates are often living in appalling conditions, especially in some local jails where there is so little space that they are forced to take turns sitting down. "Under normal circumstances", said Brigitte Troyon, ICRC detention coordinator in Rwanda, "these people would stay in small lock-ups for only one or two days before being transferred to a prison with running water, food and medical care provided by the ICRC. But since the 13 prisons in Rwanda are also overcrowded, some detainees are held in these cramped local jails for weeks". Furthermore, the situation is being aggravated by a steady stream of new detainees.

The ICRC is assigning extra staff to its teams which visit both prisons and local jails to register detainees, check on conditions of detention and negotiate improvements with the authorities. By mid-May, 32 delegates specialized in prison visits will be working across Rwanda to protect these thousands of detainees, in cooperation with ICRC medical and sanitation staff.

"Receiving a visit from an ICRC delegate also gives the detainees a feeling of hope", said Guy Dutoit, who visits four or five places of detention per week, including Gitarama prison. "They appreciate the fact that we follow their situation closely and that we take time to listen to their problems and worries."

The ICRC has for several months been urging the opening of new detention centres which could accommodate several thousand detainees and offer the prison population more humane living conditions.

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AFGHANISTAN

ICRC GAINS ACCESS TO TALIBAN PLACES OF DETENTION

From 16 to 21 April the ICRC conducted a first series of visits to 651 prisoners held by the Taliban militia in four places of detention in Kandahar province. The ICRC also received authorization to visit other Taliban places of detention at a later date in the provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Logar and Wardak.

This means that the ICRC can now carry out its protection activities for all the main parties to the conflict in Afghanistan. Despite difficulties linked to military operations in the
country, the first four months of 1995 saw a number of other positive developments. Among these was authorization for the ICRC to conduct regular visits to detainees held by the security services in Kabul. In the north of the country, the ICRC has also been able to see prisoners captured by General Dostom's Jumbesh-i-Melli.

So far this year the ICRC has conducted 43 visits in 28 places of detention (twice as many as in 1994) in 14 Afghan provinces, where its delegates registered 2,163 prisoners. The detainees have been able to contact their families thanks to Red Cross messages and have received medical and other aid (mainly medicines, blankets and soap).

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SRI LANKA

ICRC RECOVERS BODIES FROM WRECKAGE OF DOWNED MILITARY AIRCRAFT

During a murderous week-end attack on the Jaffna peninsula, two Sri Lankan military aircraft were shot down on 28 and 29 April by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) opposition group near Palaly airbase. According to a Sri Lankan government source, a total of 98 people died. The second aircraft was shot down over an area controlled by the LTTE, which asked the ICRC to go in and recover the bodies of the 52 passengers. The operation took place on 29 April in the Pannaikadduvan area, north-west of the town of Jaffna, with the agreement of the authorities in Colombo. An ICRC team collected the remains of 49 soldiers and three journalists, all Sri Lankans. The following day the bodies were transferred, by ship, from Point Pedro to Kankesanturai, in government-controlled territory, where they were handed over to the Sri Lankan military authorities.

The ICRC, active in Sri Lanka since 1989, was instrumental in starting up peace talks between the authorities in Colombo and the LTTE. During the recent truce, which lasted from 8 January to 19 April, the ICRC continued to act as a neutral intermediary by helping to pass on messages between the authorities in Colombo and the LTTE leaders through its office in Jaffna.

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CAMEROON

CLEARING AFRICA OF LANDMINES
Every month some 800 people throughout the world continue to fall victim to anti-personnel mines, a veritable scourge of our times: most of them are civilians living in Africa, above all women and children.

From 25 to 27 April, a seminar was held under the auspices of the ICRC and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Yaoundé to draw attention to this shocking fact. During the seminar, which brought together delegations from 25 mainly French-speaking African countries, participants were given information on all the medical, human and socio-economic consequences of the use of anti-personnel mines. The ICRC welcomed the intention stated by the OAU to urge all its member States to adopt a united stand in favour of a total ban on the use of landmines when they attend the Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention to be held in Vienna next September.

Participants at the seminar heard evidence given by representatives from Chad, the French-speaking African country most affected by the problem of landmines. Colonel Ndormadjingar Dilla was himself maimed during a mine-clearance operation in the north of the country that left seven soldiers dead and 14 others severely injured. Only 300 km of road, in a total area of 115,000 sq km, were made safe as a result of that operation.

Among the facts and figures illustrating the magnitude of the problem, participants were told that some 100 State-owned and private companies in 48 countries are today manufacturing 340 types of anti-personnel mines, many of which are undetectable and virtually impossible to neutralize safely. The decision announced by Belgium and Italy to no longer authorize the production, stockpiling, sale or use of anti-personnel mines was warmly welcomed by all the participants.

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CHECHNYA

AID DISTRIBUTED IN THE VILLAGE OF SAMASHKI

On 27 April the ICRC received authorization to enter Samashki, a village which had been the scene of intense fighting in the middle of the month. Some of the inhabitants who had fled have now returned and ICRC delegates have been able to distribute family parcels containing food and soap to around 13,500 people. Other supplies will be brought in soon. To date the ICRC has assisted some 400,000 people in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics of Daghestan and Ingushetia. However, security problems have prevented it for some weeks from providing aid in areas controlled by Chechen forces.

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RWANDA

ICRC CARING FOR WOUNDED FROM KIBEHO

When truck-loads of wounded people started arriving in Butare following the tragic events of 22 April in Kibeho camp, urgent measures were needed to respond to the emergency. An ICRC surgical team was already working at the hospital run by Médecins sans frontières in the southern Rwandan town but the facilities had become overcrowded and no more patients could be admitted. The ICRC therefore arranged for two surgical theatres to be set up in a wing of the Butare University Hospital. Within 24 hours the first operations had been performed, while additional medical staff from Geneva and national Red Cross societies were en route to Rwanda.

Now, two weeks after the emergency, there are more than 130 patients in the ICRC wing of the hospital, and it will probably be another six weeks before the last patients can be discharged and the makeshift surgical theatres closed down. "We still have people arriving with machete and gunshot wounds inflicted at Kibeho", said the ICRC medical coordinator in Rwanda, Christian Martin.

The ICRC medical team consists of a surgeon, a physiotherapist, an anaesthetist and 12 nurses. "Under normal circumstances we would have fewer ICRC nurses and more local staff," explained Martin. "But patients from the camps for displaced people are not well accepted by the medical personnel at the local hospital, who prefer to let us treat the wounded".

Although the ICRC team has been able to save patients' limbs in most cases, many require several operations before they are able to leave the hospital. "It is incredible to see how quiet the victims are," says ICRC nurse Hendrika van Beereendonk. "They do not cry even when they are in great pain. It is as if they have been through so much suffering and anguish already that they have no more tears left."

The ICRC reaffirms its grave concern about the desperate plight of people currently being detained in appalling conditions in Rwanda. At present some 40,000 people are being held in 150 places of detention. Each day, dozens of them die of causes arising directly from the squalor and over-crowding. Despite numerous appeals by the ICRC and others to both the Rwandan authorities and the international community, little, if anything, has been done to relieve this extreme form of suffering. For months now, the survival of thousands in Rwanda's prisons has been guaranteed only by the large quantities of medical assistance, food, and other forms of relief provided by the ICRC.

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ANGOLA

MAKING THE MOST OF A PERIOD OF CALM

On 20 November 1994, the Angolan government and UNITA signed a peace agreement in the Zambian capital Lusaka, bringing to an official end two decades of conflict. Transition from war to peace is a slow process and the need for humanitarian assistance remains acute. The current lull in fighting has, however, allowed the ICRC's work in Angola to take on a new and more hopeful dimension.

For over a year, Huambo province and the town of Ganda, both in Angola's central highlands (the region with the highest population density and the one most severely affected by the conflict), were on the receiving end of a large-scale relief operation. An average of 4,000 tonnes of food providing a balanced diet was airlifted monthly from the coastal city of Benguela to feed some 400,000 civilians.

These food distributions were ended in April as the prospects for the local harvest appeared promising. An ICRC agronomist is presently in Angola to assess the impact of the ICRC's 1994 seed-distribution programme (in October 1994, 1,750 tonnes of maize, sorghum and bean seed as well as a range of vegetable seed were distributed). Future food distributions will be determined by the outcome of the agronomist's survey. But it is already apparent that, although the population's dependency on outside humanitarian aid has decreased, self-sufficiency has not yet been achieved.

Detainees released

The Angolan government and UNITA have entrusted the ICRC with the task of supervising the release and organizing the return of persons held in connection with the conflict. The ICRC has been given information regarding a number of prisoners from both sides and granted access to most of them. On 28 April, seven prisoners were released by UNITA and handed over to the ICRC for return to Luanda, where they were reunited with their loved ones.

As difficulty with transport and telecommunications persists between government and UNITA areas, the ICRC's tracing network remains active. An average of 15,000 Red Cross Messages (short personal letters exchanged between members of separated families) have been handled every month since the beginning of 1995.

War leaves tens of thousands of amputees

In the turmoil of 1993 and 1994, the ICRC's artificial limb-fitting programme in Huambo was severely disrupted by large-scale looting, while the ICRC's other workshop, in Quito, was completely destroyed. Taking advantage of the latest period of calm in Angola, the ICRC has therefore resumed its limb-fitting work. Both workshops are being rebuilt and newly equipped, and are due to open in mid-1995. Artificial limb components will be produced by the ICRC in a Luanda workshop funded by the Swedish Red Cross.

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**BOLIVIA**

**ICRC VISITS DETAINERS**

Faced by a situation of worsening social unrest, the Bolivian government declared a state of siege throughout the country on 18 April and arrested about 300 people, including trade union leaders, miners, teachers and cocoa growers.

The International Committee of the Red Cross consequently offered its services to the Bolivian government on 26 April. The offer was accepted immediately, and two delegates and an ICRC doctor promptly began to visit and register all detainees. They saw 162 people in three places of detention in accordance with standard ICRC procedures.

The detainees were being held in military bases around the country. Following talks between the government and trade union representatives in which the Catholic Church acted as mediator, the government started to release journalists and female students on 27 April.

On 2 May the parties reached an agreement for the gradual release of all detainees.

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**WESTERN SLAVONIA**

**ICRC RESPONDING TO EMERGENCY**

ICRC delegates have gone to western Slavonia to respond to the human emergency which has arisen following the recent hostilities there.

After fighting broke out on 1 May, the ICRC was immediately able to deliver medical supplies to the health-care centre in Okucani. As thousands of refugees streamed into the Nova Topola and Gradiska areas of northern Bosnia, delegates from the Banja Luka sub-delegation provided medical supplies and other relief.

The ICRC returned to Okucani on 6 May and delegates delivered 500 individual food parcels and 500 blankets to the women and children who had been left behind in the Pakrac area after the Croatian authorities removed the menfolk there and took them to four places of detention. Delegates will continue to monitor the situation closely and respond to any urgent needs.

Delegates have so far registered over 1,100 men still being held in the towns of Bjelovar and Varazdin, in Croatia, and will keep track of them throughout their detention.

A major operation has been launched to restore contact between members of families from western Slavonia who have been separated by the fighting. To date, nearly 3,000 Red Cross Messages have been collected and distributed between men still being held, civilians remaining in Pakrac and refugees in northern Bosnia.
AFGHANISTAN

NEW RISE IN MINE-BLAST VICTIMS IN KABUL

Mines and unexploded shells continue to take their toll of victims in Kabul, two months after the intense bout of fighting in the Afghan capital came to an end. More than 80 people - most of them civilians - were wounded in April in incidents along the former front lines. During the first three months of the year, the monthly figure for mine-blast victims in Kabul was one third lower than in recent weeks. This rise in the number of mine-related accidents is due to the fact that civilians are now going back to sections of the city that had been inaccessible for a long time because of the fighting, and there are still a great many explosive devices lying around. The problem is undoubtedly compounded by the fact that tens of thousands of people - many of whom are unaware of these new hazards - have been returning to Kabul over the last few weeks. In cooperation with mine-clearance organizations, the ICRC has alerted the Kabul city authorities to the danger. Billboards have been put up warning people not to go into areas that have not yet been cleared.

In 1994, the four hospitals receiving ICRC support within the context of the Afghan conflict admitted 1,092 mine casualties for treatment.

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GENEVA

PRESIDENT’S ANNUAL PRESS CONFERENCE

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga, will give his annual press conference on:

Tuesday 30 May 1995, at 2 p.m.

at ICRC headquarters in the Committee room in the main building.

The ICRC President will be covering all major issues of topical concern and will inform the press of the humanitarian aspects of situations in which the ICRC is involved. Mr Sommaruga will also give the media details on meetings and major events scheduled for 1995. He intends to devote a large part of his press conference to answering questions from journalists.

For further information and appointments for individual interviews, please contact Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, on ++41 22 730 2317
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HAITI

UPDATE ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

On 1 April the Multinational Forces handed over responsibility to the United Nations Mission for Haiti, which is composed of 6,000 peace-keeping troops and 900 police personnel from 37 countries. The UN mission's mandate is to maintain peace in the republic during the transition period and to train a national police force by 1996.

This Caribbean country is among the poorest in the Americas and the western world, with a literacy rate of only 50%, a per capita gross national product of barely 200 US dollars and a child mortality rate of around 15%. Social differences gave rise to the present level of violence, with a small elite of wealthy French-speaking Haitians on the one hand and a poverty-stricken population, mostly living in shanty towns without drinking water or electricity, on the other. "Fragile peace" is the expression used by international bodies to describe the current situation in Haiti.

The ICRC's operation in Haiti was launched in October 1993 on the basis of the organization's right of humanitarian initiative in the event of internal violence. Its presence became more firmly established from September 1994 as a result of the United Nations' involvement and the US Administration's decision to resort to non-violent armed intervention to put an end to the situation that had been prevailing in the country since September 1991.

The above developments led the ICRC to adopt a preventive approach, which consists in spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law among the general public, the police and the international armed forces, ensuring the protection of security detainees and improving detention conditions, maintaining cooperation with the Haitian National Red Cross Society and strengthening the Society's operational capacity.

The ICRC delegation is also actively involved in promoting contacts between non-governmental organizations, international agencies and the Haitian authorities with a view to improving the overall situation, particularly as regards detention conditions in the country.

Inside Haitian prisons

In its protection work and visits to detained persons the ICRC focuses on making the authorities aware of the need to observe the rules of humanitarian law.

In 1994, ICRC delegates conducted 60 visits to 40 places of detention, including the country's 14 main prisons, and concluded that the detainees were in need of humanitarian aid. After discussing the various requirements with the Haitian authorities, the delegation undertook major sanitation work in some of the detention centres visited. It also began distributing relief supplies such as food, sleeping mats, buckets and leisure items and provided medical assistance for the detainees. The ICRC drew the attention of other organizations authorized to do renovation work in the prisons to the situation, so that they could undertake the most urgent tasks.

The children of Guantanamo
The delegation in Port-au-Prince is now coming to the end of its search for some 350 families of unaccompanied children from the Guantanamo base, and is working in cooperation with the Haitian Red Cross to ensure that their rights are respected. The ICRC's role is also to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law and human rights and to explain the specific nature of the organization's activities to government officials, members of the opposition, troops forming part of the UN peace-keeping mission, the UN agencies and non-governmental organizations.

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RWANDA

WATER FOR SURVIVAL

In Rwanda's 13 main prisons, which currently house more than 36,000 detainees (an estimated 7,000 more are being held in temporary places of detention), the ICRC is working against all odds to ensure that every individual receives at least a minimum amount of drinking water. ICRC sanitary engineers have increased the number of toilets and built new septic tanks. The water thus provided and the maintenance of sanitary facilities have for the time being prevented the situation from deteriorating even further. The possibility of a disaster still remains, however: should a water-line break, ICRC engineers would find it practically impossible to repair it, owing to the extreme overcrowding in some of the prisons. New places of detention need to be built as a matter of urgency in order to resolve this critical problem.

Red Cross provides 80% of population's water supply

Even before last year's war was over, the ICRC had begun restoring water supply systems in many cities and towns, including Kigali and Gisenyi. It also set up emergency water supplies in camps housing displaced persons within Rwanda, as well as in camps beyond the country's borders. These activities remain vital: an ICRC shipment of 500 tonnes of aluminium sulphate and chlorine has enabled the Rwandan water authorities to ensure that urban populations will have drinking water for at least another six months.

The ICRC's programmes, run jointly with the American, Australian and Swedish Red Cross Societies, are attempting to provide the same type of relief to an estimated 210,000 people living in rural areas in the Kibuye, Ruhengeri and Gisenyi districts. Their work consists in rehabilitating water sources, rerouting pipelines, replacing valves and broken pipes and repairing reservoirs.

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ICRC NEWS N° 21 / 24 may 1995

RWANDA

PRISON CONDITIONS STILL APPALLING

In view of the extreme emergency caused by overcrowding in Rwandan detention centres, the ICRC feels compelled to play an active role in building detention facilities on a new site capable of housing some 5,000 individuals. This project will go some way to relieving the pressure of numbers. The ICRC has agreed to undertake this unusual task because everything possible must be done to save human lives. The ICRC expects the Rwandan government, with support from UNDP, UNAMIR and other organizations, to act without delay to construct other temporary detention facilities.

Prison conditions in Rwanda remain alarming. To date, the ICRC has registered over 43,000 detainees. They are all packed into detention centres with no effective judicial system available to investigate their cases, try the accused or release the innocent.

Conditions are dreadful in the prisons where most of the detainees are being held. In some they do not even have enough room to sit down. They have nevertheless been able to survive with assistance from the ICRC, which is supplying them with water, food and medical care. ICRC delegates visit the prisons every day to give each detainee his life-sustaining rations of food and water. In some prisons the delegates have difficulty in moving around because of the huge numbers of detainees.

The ICRC applauds any initiative taken to hasten the entry into operation of the International Tribunal established to try those responsible for the Rwandan genocide.

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Reminder: Tuesday 30 May at ICRC headquarters, Geneva, at 2 p.m.

ANNUAL PRESS CONFERENCE OF ICRC PRESIDENT CORNELIO SOMMARUGA

During the conference, the ICRC President will review the "humanitarian" year 1994 and describe the outlook for 1995.

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

AFRICA

WAR AND VAGARIES OF NATURE AFFECT HARVESTS
The food and agricultural situation in Africa is once again very worrying this year. This is the conclusion of an assessment carried out by the ICRC's Relief Division. A summary of the conditions in each major geographical region is given below.

Tension continues to grip the countries of the Great Lakes region (Rwanda and Burundi) where efforts to revive the rural economy are encountering serious difficulties. Consequently, the populations of these countries are still largely dependent on food aid. Good rainfall and the seed distributions carried out under various agricultural rehabilitation programmes have made it possible to meet essential needs. Nevertheless, the enormous population displacements of 1994 and 1995, combined with the absence of livestock (needed to fertilize crops), still weigh heavily on the region's agriculture.

While the situation in West Africa has greatly improved owing to abundant and well-distributed rainfall, some parts of the region are still suffering from serious food shortages. The situation is particularly acute in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the war has thwarted efforts to revitalize food production. And it is especially worrying when economic instability means that regular food deliveries cannot be made to large urban centres (in Zaire, for example).

In some parts of southern Africa drought has reduced agricultural production. Most of the countries affected in this way are located in the south-eastern part of the region (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe) or the extreme south. Angola has emerged relatively unscathed from a difficult agro-climatic period, although its food and agricultural situation remains precarious as the military offensives of late 1994 frequently prevented Angolan farmers from cultivating their land. And logistical constraints (such as mined roads) that hinder the distribution of produce, make it impossible to overcome the general agricultural crisis caused by soil exhaustion.

The situation in East Africa is also still uncertain, particularly in Sudan where civil war rages on relentlessly. Since the departure of the United Nations peace-keeping forces from Somalia, large parts of the country have been subjected to sporadic outbreaks of violence. These episodes have had direct repercussions on agriculture and livestock in Somalia.

Renewed activity in the locust breeding grounds has been observed over the last few months throughout Africa, particularly in the northern half of the continent. There is a real danger that this could result in another disaster for people suffering or still reeling from the horrors of war.

The above information on food production has been gathered by means of the agricultural early-warning system developed by the ICRC. Based on field surveys carried out by ICRC agronomists and nutritionists, the system can be used to gauge the possible effect of conflict potential on agriculture in the area concerned. The results of these surveys are subsequently compared with the information provided by the FAO, WFP and others.

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CHECHNYA

CONCERN FOR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN THE SOUTH

The ICRC continues to be extremely concerned about the situation in southern Chechnya. According to reports coming in from the area, that there have been many casualties among civilians fleeing the fighting. The ICRC stresses that combatants must make a distinction between military objectives and civilian property.

The scourge of mines

Civilians who have recently returned to the towns of Shali, Samashki and Argun are having to face the growing problem of anti-personnel mines. In Shali, the local authorities have advised people not to go more than 300 metres outside the town limits. Fear of mines and unexploded shells is preventing the inhabitants from working in their fields and feeding their livestock. So far there is enough food, but the situation is likely to deteriorate if farming cannot be resumed and displaced people continue to flood in.

Fragile return to normality in Grozny

Life has to some extent returned to normal in Grozny, where 275,000 people have gone back to their homes. The train service between Grozny and Mineral'nyje Vody is running again and the airport should reopen towards the end of the month. About 20 bus lines are operating in the city, half the post offices have reopened and classes are back to normal in some 50 schools. The ICRC has recently set up new offices in Grozny and is carrying on with all its activities, particularly in the medical sphere. Last week Hospital No. 4, which had been put back in operation by the ICRC, treated more than 200 inpatients and 550 outpatients.

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Available from the ICRC:

Saving Lives
The ICRC's Mandate To Protect Civilians and Detainees in Bosnia-Herzegovina

A brochure describing in detail the work carried out by ICRC delegates to help vulnerable communities in this part of the former Yugoslavia.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL PRESS CONFERENCE

This year's press conference dealt with the responsibilities of States when confronted with grave violations of international humanitarian law. According to the ICRC, international legislation is sufficiently comprehensive to prevent many forms of human suffering arising from situations of conflict. What is lacking today is simply the will to implement those rules.

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga said that the ICRC regretted its failure to go beyond the "limited legal framework established by the States" during World War II and in particular its failure to make an appropriate response to the Holocaust. He stressed, however, that States are jointly responsible for ensuring that "even in the thick of war - including civil war - certain elementary humanitarian principles are respected".

With regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the conflict there was undoubtedly the main operational concern of the day. Mr Sommaruga told the fifty-odd reporters present that ICRC delegates had been able to visit the Serb soldiers currently in the hands of UNPROFOR. Access to UN soldiers detained by the Serb authorities was being negotiated. The ICRC was "on speaking terms with all parties involved". A withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia-Herzegovina would not affect the ICRC's "determination to assist victims there".

He stressed that using military personnel or civilians as "human shields" is a grave violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Concerning Rwanda, Mr Sommaruga reiterated the fact that the ICRC’s involvement in installing certain amenities (kitchens, sickbays, etc.) in new prisons in the country was an exceptional initiative prompted by the extreme gravity of the current humanitarian crisis.

The ICRC President also called upon all agencies involved in humanitarian assistance in Rwanda to coordinate their activities. "Duplication and overlapping can only lead to costly confusion", he said. He would welcome a clearer distinction, for example, between the existing ICRC mandate concerning people detained in the country’s prisons and that currently being considered for UN human rights observers.

Other topics dealt with were the situation in the Gulf and in Chechnya as well as global issues such as the question of landmines.

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ECUADOR-PERU

LANDMINES: THE LEGACY OF WAR
During the conflict that broke out in January of this year between Ecuador and Peru, some 60,000 landmines were laid in the southern border region of Ecuador and in the Rio Cenepa area. To date several casualties, both civilian and military, have been attributed to these mines.

In response to an ICRC memorandum on the subject delivered to both parties, the Ecuadorian authorities expressed their willingness to carry out mine clearance operations at the end of the "demilitarization phase", as provided for in the Itamaraty and Montevideo peace agreements. The Peruvian authorities for their part stated that they had not laid any mines but were willing to back up demining operations should the need arise.

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**ICRC PRESIDENT TO VISIT ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES**

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga will pay an official visit between 2 and 7 June to Israel and to the occupied territories and the autonomous territories.

During his stay he will meet the Israeli President, Mr Ezer Weizmann, the Prime Minister, Mr. Ezéchiel Rabin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Shimon Peres, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr Yasser Arafat, and various other leading Israeli and Palestinian figures.

Mr Sommaruga will convey to the Israeli and Palestinian political authorities the ICRC's concern about the humanitarian problems still affecting the people of the region. He will also have talks with senior officials of the "Palestine Red Crescent Society" and the Magen David Adom.

In addition, the ICRC President will give a lecture at Tel Aviv University at the invitation of its President.

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BURUNDI

NEW OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE IN BUJUMBURA

More fighting has broken out in Kamenge and Kinama, the two northern districts of the Burundi capital. Since Wednesday 31 May, sporadic gunfire has been heard there, while the rest of the city goes about its normal business.

The ICRC is in touch with all the parties concerned. It has been trying since the violence began to enter those parts of the city in order to evacuate the wounded, but was at first unable to do so because of the dangerous conditions.

ICRC delegates have gone into the neighbouring districts where the people who fled from Kamenge and Kinama after the first exchanges of fire have settled. On 2 June, medical supplies were delivered to health centres there, and on 5 June 40 tonnes of flour were distributed to some 20,000 displaced people, in cooperation with the World Food Programme.

The ICRC has evacuated six wounded people who were in the displaced groups, as well as six other wounded people from Bujumbura's northern districts. In addition, about thirty civilians have been able to leave the conflict area under the protection of the ICRC and with the help of a priest and the armed forces.

The ICRC is pursuing its approaches to the government in an attempt to reach the displaced people it has not yet been able to help and to evacuate the wounded still in Kamenge and Kinama. It has also offered to take part in any operation that might be undertaken to evacuate civilians wishing to leave those districts.

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PRESS BRIEFING:

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and ICRC Special Adviser to the Armed Forces Louis Geiger invite journalists to a press briefing and round table on the theme "How to improve respect for international humanitarian law in Africa", scheduled for 14 June, at 10.30 a.m., at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Geneva (Voie de Moëns 26, 1218 Grand-Saconnex). High-ranking representatives of the armed forces of English- and Portuguese-speaking African countries will be taking part in the discussions, organized as part of a seminar to be held from 12 to 14 June.

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CAMBODIA
MINE WARFARE: THE VICTIMS TAKE COURAGEOUS ACTION

The terrible injuries inflicted by the explosion of a landmine are only part of the ordeal mine victims have to endure. Life afterwards is at least as difficult, for they often feel useless and unwanted, a burden on society. So when a British NGO, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), decided to employ twenty amputees as mine-clearance personnel in Cambodia, there was no shortage of volunteers. But one problem had to be solved: such personnel cannot wear traditional artificial limbs as the metal components (bolts, screws...) would interfere with the metal detectors used.

In support of MAG's innovative project, the ICRC's limb-fitting workshop in Battambang set out to design and manufacture completely metal-free prostheses made entirely of polypropylene. Following successful tests, the 20 volunteers, included in a larger group of able-bodied mine-clearance personnel, gave a public demonstration of their skills. A military observer present found it difficult to spot the amputees in the group, as their new prostheses enabled them to move almost completely normally.

Aware of the importance for amputees to become self-reliant and find a new purpose in life, the ICRC hopes that the programme for mine-clearance by specially trained amputees will be extended throughout Cambodia and even further afield. The ICRC delegation in Cambodia is ready to share its technological experience with everyone interested in combating the scourge of mines.

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GEORGIA

ICRC VISITS SECURITY DETAINES

Between mid-May and 1 June ICRC delegates conducted a series of visits in Tbilisi to people detained for security reasons. They saw a total of 37 detainees, including 20 for the first time, and had interviews in private with each of them, in accordance with the ICRC's customary working procedures. They also provided the detainees with medical assistance and soap.

The ICRC considers these visits as a major step forward, since it had for many months been asking the competent authorities for access to all categories of detainees who come within its purview. Since 1994 ICRC delegates have visited and registered more than 120 people held in connection with the Abkhaz conflict.

Forthcoming events:

The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Miguel Angel Martinez, will be received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga at ICRC headquarters on 12 June at 10.15 a.m. Speeches will be delivered during the ceremony. The press is cordially invited to attend.

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NORTHERN CAUCASUS

ICRC MODIFIES ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The situation of the civilians affected by the conflict in Chechnya has changed considerably over the past few weeks. In Grozny, the return of large numbers of displaced persons has brought the population of that city up to 275,000 of the 400,000 who were living there before the events that have affected it. The markets in the area are stocked normally and food prices reasonable.

The ICRC has adapted its assistance programmes to these developments. It now concentrates on reaching the most vulnerable members of the population, such as the elderly, the disabled, orphans and women who are heads of families. In June, each such individual will receive a 20-kg food parcel (containing rice or pasta, vegetable oil, beans, sugar, cheese, corned beef and soap) enabling them to supplement their diet for three months. A second distribution is planned for the autumn. In addition, persons displaced by the fighting who have now returned to the city will receive blankets, candles and reinforced plastic sheeting to repair their homes and protect themselves from the cold. Since the conflict began, 400,000 people, most of them displaced, have received ICRC assistance.

Restoring medical and sanitary services

Since the start of the conflict in Chechnya, the ICRC has assisted hospitals there by distributing more than 70 tonnes of medical supplies. Repair work on Hospital No. 4 in Grozny is progressing and delegates are continuing to monitor the situation in the other hospitals in the area. In Gudermes, Shali, and Argun, in the south-east, the ICRC plans to re-equip the most seriously damaged hospitals, having already furnished them with medical assistance according to their needs.

In addition, ICRC trucks are continuing to bring drinking water to Grozny, distributing an average of 2.5 litres of water per person per day. Four ICRC sanitary engineers are working tirelessly to improve the water-distribution systems. A well has been dug and equipped to supply a school in Argun. In Dagestan almost 6,000 displaced people have been provided with sanitary facilities by the ICRC.

Concern persists about people living in the south

Although life is returning to normal in Grozny and the surrounding area, the same cannot be said of the mountainous area to the south under the control of pro-Dudayev forces. The civilian population fleeing the fighting around Shatoi is reported to be suffering great hardship. An additional 3,000 people displaced from the area around Vedeno arrived last week in Dagestan, and their numbers could well continue to grow.

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GENEVA

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF OF AFRICAN ARMED FORCES
MEET UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

The commanders-in-chief of the armed forces of fifteen African English- and Portuguese-speaking countries met in Geneva from 12 to 14 June at the invitation of the ICRC. This meeting was the initiative of Louis Geiger, the ICRC's new special adviser to the armed forces and former senior officer in the Swiss army.

The meeting enabled the African commanders and ICRC experts to exchange views on the need to teach international humanitarian law (IHL) to soldiers and officers alike. The ICRC presented its activities in Africa with emphasis on the conditions of security essential for it to carry out its work.

The commanders-in-chief were given a clear idea of the difficulties facing ICRC delegates in the field. They in turn confirmed that they accepted total responsibility for the conduct of the troops under their command and for their compliance with international humanitarian law.

A clear distinction was drawn between neutral, impartial humanitarian action on the one hand and the peace-keeping operations of intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and the OAU. "It is essential to avoid any confusion between humanitarian action and military action", declared Cornelio Sommaruga, the ICRC's President.

The participants commended the ICRC for enabling them to meet to discuss this issue of common interest.

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RWANDA

VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

The ICRC is taking part in a campaign aimed at preventing children up to 5 years old from contracting polio. The programme is being implemented in Rwanda by the government and organizations such as UNICEF, with the ICRC being asked to supervise vaccinations in the prefectures of Kigali and Gitarama.

During the coming month, more than 33,000 children will be immunized with ICRC help. Delegates will bring vaccines packed in ice to health centres where the immunizations are to take place, and teach the local staff how to administer them. As there is a chronic lack of medical personnel in Rwanda, many teachers and students are engaged in this campaign, and require close supervision.
"The mothers are arriving with their children in large numbers at our health centres", said Gisela Cischerwski, an ICRC nurse. "They are aware that vaccinations are important. We also vaccinate children against other diseases such as tuberculosis and measles. It's a simple and very effective way of saving young lives."

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It is a harsh reality that as many war crimes as ever are still being committed on all continents, despite the fact that for nearly 20 years now international humanitarian law (IHL) has been strengthened to enhance the defence of human dignity in times of conflict. The ICRC believes that the existing international treaties are already very comprehensive and precise, and that the problem lies in their implementation and in the fulfilment of the obligations contracted by States.

As a result of the horrors experienced in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the international community has decided to set up two international tribunals, in The Hague and in Arusha (Tanzania), to try people accused of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. The ICRC welcomes this initiative, which it would like to become permanent and universal.

There is another approach, however, which would better serve to ensure respect for the individual in armed conflicts: since 1949, national courts have been competent to judge war crimes, but have never put this obligation into practice because of the absence of national legislation instituting penalties for such acts. The ICRC will therefore establish in July a new unit called "Advisory Services on IHL", which will examine the legislation of every country with a view to recommending the legal reforms required for them to prosecute all people accused of war crimes, wherever they may be, and to set up an internal structure capable of ensuring genuine compliance with humanitarian law as a whole.

The ICRC's "Advisory Services", working in close cooperation with the National Societies, will facilitate the establishment of a network of committees for the implementation of international humanitarian law, on which the various ministries concerned would be represented. The aim will be to identify for each country the missing legal nexus required to adapt national legislation to international humanitarian law and to bring to justice any person found guilty of such crimes. From January 1996 the ICRC will extend these services to the field and will appoint a legal expert responsible for each continent.

The purpose of this ICRC project is to help States set up the structures they need to provide more effective protection for the victims of armed conflicts and to punish war crimes. The successful accomplishment of this task of consultation, analysis and harmonization of legal instruments will serve to ensure that no perpetrator of such crimes goes unpunished.

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NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT
ICRC PROVIDES ASSISTANCE

Although life is gradually returning to normal in the Nagorny Karabakh region, thanks to the cease-fire which has now lasted for over a year, certain population groups, particularly the elderly, are still finding it very difficult to cope with the combined effects of the conflict and the isolation in which they live. The ICRC accordingly decided to set up a programme to come to their aid. Between February and June, 27,000 people in 160 villages received soap and food parcels containing cooking oil, sugar, beans, canned meat and cheese.

In the Fizuli district, on the other side of the front line, the restoration of peace has enabled many displaced persons to return home. Between November 1994 and April of this year, some 35,000 people received resettlement aid from the ICRC in the form of food parcels and reinforced plastic sheeting for repairs to their homes. Since May, this assistance has been adapted to the needs of some 14,000 displaced persons still remaining in the area and of 1,200 vulnerable residents.

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GENEVA

FIRST INTER-AGENCY TEST OF EMERGENCY SANITATION EQUIPMENT

In all conflict situations, such as those in Rwanda, Chechnya or the former Yugoslavia, sanitary engineers are trying to solve public health problems and to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. Water and sanitation programmes play a major part in ICRC relief operations.

To discuss the complex technical problems arising in connection with these programmes, the ICRC convened an informal inter-agency meeting, which was held in Geneva from 13 to 20 June 1995 and was attended by engineers and technicians representing National Red Cross Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and various United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (OXFAM, Médecins sans Frontières, International Action Against Hunger). The meeting was the third of its kind.

For the first time, the participants were given a chance to test their emergency equipment for a whole week. Field conditions were simulated (for instance, water of a quality comparable to that of African rivers) so that the engineers and technicians could check the performance of their mobile water purification units, particularly the number of litres produced per day and per unit, as well as the quality of water obtained.

The meeting enabled the humanitarian agencies to move towards a common position on the standardization of equipment and to develop their cooperation with a view to improving their complementarity in the field.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

SEEKING WATER IN SARAJEVO:
CIVILIANS PAY A HIGH PRICE

On 16 June 1995 the ICRC called on the belligerents in Bosnia-Herzegovina to reach a minimum consensus on humanitarian issues. In its appeal the ICRC specifically requested that the water supply be restored to Sarajevo and its suburbs, where the water has been cut off for more than three weeks. Restoring the water supply would involve no major technical difficulty, but there is a clear lack of political will to do so. On 18 June 1995, just two days after the ICRC issued its appeal, seven people queuing up for water in Dobrinja suburb of Sarajevo were killed by a shell and more than ten others were injured.

Because of the lack of piped water in the city the ICRC’s sanitary engineers have had to make other arrangements for the time being. They have set up around 120 water distribution points in different places. "This is a futile effort if in those very same places people are killed", said Béatrice Mégevand, head of the ICRC delegation in Sarajevo. Some of the newly installed handpumps have even been removed since Sunday’s attack in Dobrinja, because they are considered to be security risks. Many people are now going out at night to fill jerricans in the streets. "It is shameful that innocent civilians, who have no choice but to venture outdoors in search of water, are the ones to pay the price in this conflict", added Béatrice Mégevand.

Lack of water can also have serious medical consequences. With the arrival of the warm weather diseases like hepatitis, enterocolitis, dysentery and scabies might spread rapidly if the water shortage persists.

The ICRC is once again compelled to urge the belligerents to show respect for at least the most basic humanitarian principle: spare the civilians.

Further information: Nina Winquist, ICRC Sarajevo, tel. ++387 71 656 894 or Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2317
Members of the Organization of African Unity meeting in Addis Ababa have adopted a common stance endorsing an absolute ban on the production and use of anti-personnel mines. The decision was taken at the 32nd session of the OAU Council of Ministers, held from 21 to 23 June in the Ethiopian capital. The meeting followed a number of seminars held in Africa this year by the OAU in cooperation with the ICRC.

This position will be supported by the OAU at the forthcoming Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention (Vienna, 25 September-13 October 1995). Only three African States have so far become party to the Convention.

"This decision is a major achievement for Africa", said Marguerite Contat, head of the ICRC's mission to the OAU. "The States of this continent have demonstrated their resolve to form a united front against the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines. The international community and the ICRC, which has helped raise awareness of this scourge in Africa, have a responsibility to cooperate closely with the OAU in the implementation of this resolution."

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AFGHANISTAN

ICRC OPENS FIRST-AID POST IN KANDAHAR

On 17 June the ICRC opened a first-aid post in Kandahar to facilitate the treatment and evacuation of the war-wounded, thus establishing a presence for the first time in south-western Afghanistan. Kandahar province has no adequate medical facilities, and severely wounded people in the area have to seek treatment at the ICRC's surgical hospital in Quetta, set up across the border in Pakistan in 1983. However, it takes at least a day to reach Quetta and in many cases the victims receive no care at all before undertaking the journey.

The new first-aid post in Kandahar should go some way towards alleviating this problem. The Taliban militia, which controls the area, has assured the ICRC that it will facilitate the evacuation of the wounded, even during the night-time curfew imposed on Kandahar. On the day the post opened, four serious cases were taken to Quetta. The first of these was a boy of 14, Raz Mohammad, who suffered severe leg injuries when he stepped on a landmine while going to work in the fields.
Growing number of casualties

The fighting in recent weeks between the Taliban and government forces to the south of Kabul and Herat has claimed many victims, most of them combatants. A large number of civilians have also been wounded, especially by mine explosions when they venture out during a lull in the fighting to work in the fields or to travel. Last year the hospital in Quetta treated a total of 906 war-wounded, whereas the level of fighting is now such that 742 victims were admitted in the first five months of this year alone. In April the ICRC was obliged to increase its surgical teams in Quetta and set up tents in the hospital compound to accommodate all the patients being brought in from Afghanistan.

Plans to renovate hospital

The ICRC is planning to renovate the Mirwais government hospital in Kandahar. Work should last until October, when a medical team will arrive to treat war casualties and train the necessary Afghan staff. As soon as the Mirwais hospital is operational, preparations will be made for the closure of the Quetta facility. To finance the Kandahar operation and its other traditional activities in the area (protection of detainees, cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society and spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law), the ICRC has just issued an appeal for 3.2 million Swiss francs over and above the initial budget estimate of 41.3 million francs for its work in connection with the Afghan conflict in 1995.

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BURUNDI

WOUNDED EVACUATED FROM NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF BUJUMBURA

Following the violence of early June, life in the northern districts of Bujumbura returned to normal, but only for a few days. Clashes broke out again on 17 June as the ICRC was preparing to distribute relief supplies to the local population.

The residents fled their homes and the ICRC still cannot enter the affected areas. Delegates were nevertheless able to collect 14 casualties around the fringes and take them to the capital's hospitals, which have received a tonne of medical supplies from the ICRC. On 24 and 25 June, 12 further victims were evacuated from the surrounding hills in the wake of military operations. Security conditions have prevented the ICRC from evacuating the wounded and sick who are still inside the stricken neighbourhoods and who have no access to food or medical care.

Delegates go regularly to the areas where the population has sought refuge, to listen to accounts of the events and to assess the needs. The ICRC has distributed 20 tonnes of food provided by the World Food Programme to some 10,000 newly displaced people. It is also
stepping up its contacts with the military and civilian authorities to urge that civilians be spared by the violence.

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RWANDA

NEW EMERGENCY APPEAL REACHES
95 MILLION SWISS FRANCS

The initial budget estimate for ICRC activities in Rwanda in 1995 was 66 million Swiss francs (56.4 million US dollars). The ICRC has decided to increase this amount to Sfr 95 million ($81.2 million), mainly because the number of detainees needing assistance has risen far beyond last year’s estimations.

Lives at risk in the prisons

There are now over 47,000 people detained in Rwanda. Conditions in the prisons are appalling and have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of inmates. The ICRC launched a large-scale assistance programme for detainees earlier this year, providing them with food and medical care and improving hygiene. The ICRC is also working with the authorities and the United Nations to set up a new temporary detention centre at Nsinda, erecting tents to house detainees and the camp’s medical and sanitary infrastructure and providing medical supplies, cooking equipment and food.

Health centres rehabilitated

Under the ICRC’s project delegation programme, the German and French Red Cross Societies have begun rehabilitation work on 15 health centres which were damaged in 1994. These centres provide health care for some 450,000 people. Projects to repair water supply systems in the Kibuye, Gisenyi and Ruhengeri areas, carried out by the American, Australian and Swedish National Societies respectively, will continue until the end of the year and will benefit more than 300,000 people.

Food aid for 400,000 people

Food distributions are planned for civilians returning to their homes after the closure of the camps near Gikongoro and for vulnerable local residents. Some 400,000 people will be covered by this programme. The ICRC is also planning to supply around 30,000 families with hoes, bean seed and sweet potato cuttings in time for the next planting season in September.

3,000 families reunited
Since April 1994 over 920,000 Red Cross messages have been handled by the ICRC in cooperation with National Red Cross Societies. The effort to trace the families of unaccompanied minors continues, with 70,000 children already registered and 18,000 tracing requests filed by parents hoping to find their children. So far around 3,000 families have been reunited.

There are currently 1,550 local staff and 150 expatriates working in Rwanda, including 35 from the National Red Cross Societies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the USA.

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UN MEETING ON MINE CLEARANCE
"A HOPEFUL SIGN"

In one of the first global governmental responses to the humanitarian crisis caused by landmines, the United Nations will convene an International Meeting on Mine Clearance in Geneva from 5 to 7 July 1995. ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, who will address the meeting on Thursday 6 July, welcomes this move as a hopeful sign that the international community has begun to take seriously the moral, political and financial responsibility it bears for the appalling suffering and damage already wrought by landmines. The ICRC urges the participants to recognize that the results of the Mine Clearance Meeting will be greatly devalued unless bold action is taken to prohibit anti-personnel mines at the forthcoming Vienna Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention.

The ICRC stresses the need for vastly increased efforts to clear the world of the 110 million mines already in place and for the imposition of a total ban on anti-personnel mines at the Vienna Conference (25 September-13 October 1995). Each year, 20 times more mines are laid than are removed, and two to five decades are added to the estimated 1,100 years it will take to clear existing mines.

Since 1985 the ICRC has treated some 140,000 war casualties, of whom one in five was a mine victim, and produced over 80,000 artificial limbs, mostly for mine amputees.

This week's meeting will seek pledges for the UN Voluntary Fund for Mine Clearance. A variety of technical panels will focus simultaneously on the training, management and education needed for mine clearance operations, the development of new clearance technologies, and means of protecting the civilian population. It is expected that the meeting will be addressed by ministers for foreign affairs and development and will bring together UN, national and non-governmental clearance experts from around the world. The ICRC Medical Division will contribute to a panel presentation on the treatment and rehabilitation of mine victims.

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SRI LANKA
INCREASE IN MILITARY ACTIVITY AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

More than two months after the end of the truce between the Colombo government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), there has been an alarming deterioration in the
situation in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, with heavy loss of life among fighting units, thousands of families displaced and an upsurge in attacks on civilians. The LTTE's lightning operation of 28 June against the Mandaithivu garrison left more than 110 dead, three of them civilians.

This attack was yet another incident in a spectacular series of military operations, accompanied by acts of violence directly affecting the civilian population. Two Sri Lankan navy vessels were sunk on 19 April in Trincomalee, marking the end of a three-month ceasefire. On 28 and 29 April, 92 people died when two transport planes of the Sri Lankan air force were shot down near the Palali base. A few weeks later, on 26 May, 42 Sinhalese civilians were massacred in a fishing village north of Trincomalee. Meanwhile there has been a sharp rise in the number of people arrested in the capital Colombo and in the eastern part of the island. Since April the ICRC has visited and registered the identity of more than 300 detainees all over the country.

A single surgeon for a 1,000-bed hospital

Medical services in the conflict areas have also been affected by the deteriorating situation. A recent ICRC survey found that there is only one experienced surgeon left in Jaffna's 1,000-bed university hospital, and the hospital's sanitary installations are in an extremely dilapidated condition. There are no surgical facilities in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu or Mannar districts. The Trincomalee government hospital has only one surgeon and one anaesthetist working half-time. The embargo on medicines was reinstated after the hostilities resumed, and stocks are rapidly running out.

To cope with the most urgent needs, the ICRC has decided to double its emergency medical stocks in Jaffna and plans to send in additional medical staff. It remains extremely concerned, however, about the growing isolation of the region's civilian population, the movement of people and goods between the Jaffna peninsula and the rest of the country being severely restricted because of hazardous security conditions. Jaffna's civilian population is becoming increasingly dependent on relief shipments of medical and food supplies and other basic necessities, which are ferried from Colombo to the peninsula by government ships under ICRC protection. Up until early June an ICRC-chartered ship had been transporting medical cases and people rejoicing their families, but on 4 June the vessel hit a mine and sank in Kankesanturai harbour. The ICRC is currently attempting to find another ship, and is seeking new security guarantees from the belligerents.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

PSYCHOLOGICAL AID IN TUZLA

The war in the former Yugoslavia is leaving deep psychological scars among the civilian population and among the various armed forces involved. Staff of humanitarian agencies are also subject to stress and have to find ways of coping with
the tragedies they witness every day. The shell attack which killed 71 children and young people in Tuzla on 25 May was particularly distressing. "The whole town was in a state of shock", said Martine Bourquin, an ICRC nursing adviser who had left Tuzla that very morning.

Martine Bourquin, who specializes in the prevention of post-traumatic stress, immediately took the initiative of returning to Tuzla to help the ICRC delegation surmount this harrowing event. "To be really effective, action must be taken within 48 to 72 hours of the incident", she explained. Her services were at once requested by several people, and she began the "emotional debriefing" of two local employees who had been in the town's main square at the time of the attack.

"Emotional debriefing"

During these consultations, the specialist first explains the subject's reactions to the traumatic incident, emphasizing the fact that the situation is totally exceptional and that such reactions (sleep disorders, sensitivity to certain noises or smells, etc.) are quite normal. The subject then talks about what happened. In the present case the stress victims had not had the courage to return to the scene of the attack, so Martine Bourquin accompanied them there. This procedure provides an opportunity to discuss the thoughts and feelings experienced at the time. The third phase goes deeper into the subject's emotions. This is the key moment of the process, when the subject releases his or her tensions and anxieties in a catharsis of tears. Martine Bourquin is careful to explain to everyone who consults her that what she offers is a kind of psychological first aid, and that time helps bring about a complete healing of all wounds.

Radio broadcasts

While in Tuzla Martine Bourquin also responded to other requests for individual or group consultations. She took part twice in radio broadcasts, explaining post-traumatic stress disorder and giving advice to listeners. At the request of the psychologist who runs the Tuzla centre for women and children, she undertook the "emotional debriefing" of about 30 psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists who had themselves been deeply distressed by the event. These specialists will now follow up on the spontaneous initiative taken by the ICRC. A telephone help line was set up in the centre for women and children; in the first few days after the tragedy the telephone never stopped ringing.

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RWANDA

ONE MILLION RED CROSS MESSAGES EXchanged

The ICRC's Red Cross message service in Rwanda has reached a new peak: in June the staff of the ICRC Tracing Agency managed to handle 360,000 messages, thus reaching an impressive figure of over one million since August 1994. These messages allowed Rwandans to get in touch with relatives inside the country, in refugee camps in Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire or even further away in a third country.

Thirty ICRC delegates and 250 local staff are currently working in Rwanda and the surrounding countries to provide this vital service. "Tracing people in Rwanda is extremely difficult", said Catherine Gendre, head of the Tracing Agency there. "Up-country, in the villages there are often no precise addresses. Our staff have to go from door to door to find out where people live. In the capital Kigali, where the population has changed to a large extent, 12 local specialists are distributing 2,000 messages a week, some of them after only the second or third try".

Tracing staff have also registered around 70,000 unaccompanied children, all waiting to be reunited with their mothers, their fathers or other close relatives. Together with other organizations, such as the Save the Children Fund, the ICRC has so far reunited more than 4,000 children with their families.

As most detainees in Rwandan prisons have lost contact with their families, the ICRC is providing them with the opportunity to write messages to their relatives and to receive news from them through the Red Cross message network. Some 50,000 detainees are currently held in Rwanda in about 200 places of detention.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

"RADIO LINK": ONE YEAR ON

One year ago the ICRC and the BBC launched their joint "Radio Link" operation for the former Yugoslavia. The aim of this special radio programme, designed to back the efforts of the ICRC Tracing Agency, is to "trace the untraceable", namely all people for whom the ICRC and other Red Cross staff have failed to find the right address or contact person. Of all the messages handled by the ICRC, about 5% cannot be delivered through the traditional distribution system, and "Radio Link" is thus the last chance for the senders to discover some trace of their relatives.

Participation on the rise
An evaluation carried out to measure the impact of "Radio Link" has shown a rising participation of persons entitled to make use of it. So far 1,200 people have taken advantage of the possibilities it offers, i.e. around 25% of all possible beneficiaries of the programme.

ICRC delegates in the field report that people in the former Yugoslavia are quite familiar with "Radio Link" and that 50% of those asked said that they listen regularly to the programme, which is also broadcast by ten local radio stations.

The ICRC's tracing work in the former Yugoslavia has become one of the organization's most extensive operations to search for missing persons and restore family links. It has re-established contact between thousands of people, and over the past year more than four million messages have been exchanged and 1,000 families reunited.

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INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON MINE CLEARANCE
ICRC REAFFIRMS NEED FOR TOTAL BAN ON ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

The United Nations International Meeting on Mine Clearance, which ended in Geneva on 7 July, raised less than a third of the UN's goal of 75 million US dollars for its new Voluntary Fund for Mine Clearance. This demonstrated the difficulty of mobilizing the international community to deal effectively with the consequences of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines and highlighted the urgent need to tackle the very source of the problem - through a total ban on these "instruments of blind terror", as called for by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and the UN Secretary-General in their addresses to the gathering.

Despite the disappointing financial results, the meeting provided evidence of growing support for a complete prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Norway added its name to the list of ten countries already supporting a ban while representatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the European Commission announced the adoption of resolutions by the OAU's Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, appealing for the absolute prohibition of both anti-personnel mines and blinding laser weapons.

Among the 97 countries participating in the meeting were Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique, which stressed the devastating effects of landmines on post-conflict rehabilitation. Croatia and Peru provided graphic accounts of the problems which mines have caused in ongoing and recent conflicts. Governments will be considering proposals to limit and prohibit the use of anti-personnel mines at the Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention, to be held in Vienna from 25 September to 13 October 1995.

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SOMALIA
NEW CASES OF MALNUTRITION IN THE SOUTH

While on mission in southern Somalia in June, ICRC doctors specialized in nutrition noted new cases of malnutrition among former refugees who have returned from Kenya to resettle in the province of Kismayo and in the Juba valley. Those most severely affected are children and elderly people.

Difficult return to self-sufficiency

In these rural areas where thousands of people have gone back to their homes, the ICRC distributed seed and farming tools in March 1995 to help them regain a degree of self-sufficiency. However, agricultural production did not resume as it should have owing to drought and flooding. The depleted soil has failed to yield the expected seasonal harvests and farmers are now facing a critical food shortage. Malnutrition, which has already affected several thousand people living in the Juba valley and in Kismayo province, could become more severe and spread to other areas.

Preventive humanitarian aid

To prevent the situation from deteriorating further, which would prompt fresh population movements towards the towns, the ICRC has decided to set up in the coming weeks a programme to distribute food and fishing tackle as needed to 13,000 families in the Juba valley, while continuing its seed distributions. The programme is intended to supplement the diet of people living in the region until the next harvests, which should take place in three to six months, depending on the area.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
RED CROSS MOBILIZES TO HELP
DISPLACED PEOPLE IN AND AROUND TUZLA

During the past few days, the ICRC and several National Red Cross Societies have taken swift action to assist people expelled from the Srebrenica safety zone. When visiting the villages around Tuzla where some 18,000 people have sought refuge, teams from the local Red Cross have so far distributed 6,000 individual food parcels, each containing 1 kg of sugar, 1 litre of vegetable oil, 350 g of cheese, 350 g of corned beef, 1 kg of beans and 150 g of salt, as well as soap and detergent. In addition, the displaced people have been provided with 5,300 blankets, 20 tonnes of flour, 1,000 jerrycans, 2,400 bars of soap and several hundred bottles of liquid detergent. At the Tuzla air base, where a further 5,600 people are being given shelter, a team of ICRC sanitary engineers has installed two 2,000-litre tanks to supply purified water.

**Drinking water: a major problem**

Surveys by delegates on the spot have confirmed that the shortage of drinking water is one of the major problems, and the ICRC has therefore sent in two additional sanitation experts. It is planned to distribute 500 more jerrycans in each village to enable people to collect and store drinking water. As most of the displaced population are children and babies, suitable food and clothing will also be provided. A total of 20 expatriates and 50 local employees are currently engaged in this large-scale operation.

**Red Cross trucks reach Tuzla**

On 19 July, a Red Cross convoy of four trucks managed to reach Tuzla from Zagreb, bringing 17,000 individual food parcels and 10,500 toilet kits each containing a towel, toothbrushes, toothpaste and razors. The relief consignment also included 100 cooking stoves and medical supplies. A second convoy of 11 trucks will take in another large amount of supplies to Tuzla this week.

**Red Cross message service to restore family contact**

The family message service established by the Red Cross in all the villages
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
ICRC ACTION IN ENCLAVES CRISIS

More than 1,000 civilians - most of them women and children - have fled the fighting that is now raging in the north of the Bihac enclave to seek refuge with relatives in the town of Cazin. Since 21 July ICRC delegates, working with local Red Cross volunteers, have been handing out food parcels, blankets, and jerricans to enable the people to store water. In anticipation of a possible increase in the number of war wounded, the ICRC also stands ready to provide emergency surgical supplies to medical facilities in Cazin, Kladusa, Glina and Vojnic.

At the start of the crisis affecting the enclaves, the ICRC set up a special tracing service in Kladanj, on the Tuzla air base and in the various places where displaced persons have gathered, to try and locate people separated from their families or reported missing. Hundreds of such cases have been reported to the six ICRC delegates working on the spot with the help of 28 interpreters. These reports will provide a sound basis for the ICRC’s efforts to trace missing persons and restore family ties, and for its visits to detainees. All the information collected is handled confidentially so as to ensure the safety of those seeking family members and of the relatives with whom they have lost contact.

Emergency teams of medical personnel and water supply experts, stationed by the ICRC at the Kladanj checkpoint and in the Tuzla area, stand ready to take action in the event of a fresh influx of displaced people from Zepa and its surroundings.

Since the fall of the Srebrenica enclave, the ICRC has not succeeded in gaining access to individuals detained by the Bosnian Serb forces. It is relentlessly pursuing its approaches to the authorities in charge, which have publicly pledged, on several occasions, to respect the Geneva Conventions. So far they have not honoured their commitments, and the ICRC is deeply concerned about the plight of all those whom it is unable to protect.

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CHECHNYA
ICRC TAILORS ITS OPERATION TO THE SITUATION

A recent survey carried out by ICRC delegates in Chechnya has shown that the situation is returning to normal. Markets are again adequately stocked, except in the south, and food prices are reasonable. The ICRC has adapted its assistance programmes accordingly and is now focusing on reaching the most vulnerable members of the population: the elderly, the disabled, orphans, and women looking after their families alone.
One major change has been in the field of the tracing agency. In the past months the ICRC arranged for the exchange of 27,000 messages, mainly between people who remained in the capital Grozny and their relatives in neighbouring republics or in the Russian Federation. The success of this operation was largely due to the rapidity of the ICRC service. In order to speed up the delivery of messages, the delegation in Nalchik used telegram and telephone links. Messages were read over the phone to the addressees, who could reply immediately; the answers were copied on to Red Cross message forms and distributed the next day. The senders in Grozny could therefore expect a reply within 10 days. "It's one of the fastest operations we have ever managed to set up", remarked Dominique Perruchoud of the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva.

With the restoration of normal postal services between Chechnya and elsewhere, the request for Red Cross messages decreased sharply from May 1995. During the peak periods around 2,000 messages were being exchanged weekly, but this figure dropped to only 100-200 in the last few weeks. "There is no further need for the Red Cross message network, so we are closing down the service", said Dominique Perruchoud.

**Detainees still allowed to send messages**

There will be one important exception: detainees visited by the ICRC will still have the opportunity to write messages to their families. So far some 30 visits have been carried out in a dozen places of detention, and more than 500 detainees have been seen on both sides since the beginning of the conflict.

**Rehabilitation of hospitals and medical assistance**

Improving security conditions during recent weeks have allowed ICRC teams to start rehabilitation work on several hospitals in southern Chechnya. Despite the difficulties and the serious damage suffered by medical facilities in the region almost all of them have remained operational, thanks to the very competent local medical staff who continued working throughout the conflict. Although the number of war-wounded is decreasing, a great deal of assistance is needed to help these facilities carry on with their daily work. The ICRC has distributed cleaning materials, plastic sheeting to cover blown-out windows, basic medicines and dressing materials to around 20 hospitals and small health posts in southern Chechnya, and will continue to provide such assistance as needed.

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**SOMALIA**

**RELIEF OPERATIONS CONTINUE IN JUBA VALLEY**

ICRC relief distributions are continuing in Somalia's Lower Juba Valley, where people displaced by the civil war are facing serious food shortages. Some 2,600 families living in
11 villages in the Marere area are to receive seed and food this week. The current emergency arose as a result of adverse weather conditions, causing floods in some areas and a shortage of rain elsewhere.

This operation will bring to more than 9,000 the number of families assisted in the Juba Valley, south of Mogadishu, since the beginning of June. Each family receives a month's supply of maize, beans and cooking oil, together with seed and fishing equipment. Further surveys will be carried out to determine future needs.

The previous major distribution took place at the beginning of July to 5,000 families in the Gilib area, where returnees were left destitute after floods washed away their seedlings; many children were seriously malnourished. Stephanie Daniels, an ICRC nurse who revisited the area last week, said the situation had already improved: "Seeds have been planted and once again the people have some hope of producing their own food".

The distributions are carried out in close cooperation with village elders. ICRC field officer Mohammed Jeh says this is crucial to the success of the operation in this very poor area: "They have helped us explain to the local people that the assistance is intended for the most needy".

Fred Grimm, head of the ICRC's Somalia delegation, said there was an urgent need for other organizations to take action: "In the Juba Valley, the ICRC has responded to an emergency situation because no-one else was doing so. But we know there are other places, such as Kismayo, where people are in a desperate situation. We are in touch with other agencies, including the UN, to explain the problem and are urging them to intervene."

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Video pictures taken recently in Somalia are available from Christophe Naigeon or Catherine Tellier, Agence PERISCOOP, Montpellier, France Tel. +33 670 7580

ANGOLA

NEW HOPE FOR WAR AMPUTEES

The guns have fallen silent in Angola since the peace process began in November last year. Peace has also brought fresh hope to the most hapless victims of the Angolan conflict: amputees. With the gradual reopening of the main communication routes people can now travel about again. This means that the many civilians injured by anti-personnel mines and abandoned to their fate while the conflict was still raging can at long last make their way to one of the country's rehabilitation centres for amputees.

"The number of amputees needing artificial limbs is estimated at more than 20,000", said Theo Verhoeff, the ICRC's orthopaedic specialist on the spot. "When you walk through the streets, you constantly come across disabled people who have no prostheses. In Angola,
orthopaedic technicians have a huge task before them - as do the mine-clearing teams."
According to United Nations estimates, there are between 9 and 15 million unexploded
mines scattered all over the country.

The ICRC suspended its artificial limb projects in 1993, after the ransacking and
destruction of its workshops in Huambo and Kuito. Activities have resumed this month
with the opening of a centre for the production of orthopaedic components in the capital,
Luanda. The centre, set up in cooperation with the Angolan Ministry of Health and the
Swedish Red Cross, will supply components for all the country's orthopaedic facilities.
Reconstruction work is currently being done on the ICRC's workshops in Huambo and
Kuito, which will be operational by next October. Between 1979 and 1993, the ICRC's
orthopaedic facilities in Angola manufactured a total of 12,500 artificial limbs.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
SENSITIVE ISSUE OF MISSING PERSONS

Following the fall of the Muslim enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, some 6,000 people were reported missing and the ICRC was approached by many anxious families seeking news. At the end of July ICRC delegates were allowed to visit two places of detention run by the Bosnian Serbs, registering the names of 164 detainees from Srebrenica in the Batkovic camp and 44 detainees from Zepa in a camp in Rogatica.

The ICRC has learned that several hundred or even thousand men from Srebrenica have managed to reach the Tuzla area, but since the Bosnian government has not granted access to them it is not possible to determine their number or whether they have been able to contact their families.

ICRC delegates on the spot are stepping up their efforts to gain access to all those being held and to visit all places of detention in eastern Bosnia.

In another development, about a thousand men from Zepa have crossed the border into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and are now in Bajina Basta. The ICRC has sent in two delegates and four local employees from Belgrade to collect Red Cross messages from the men for forwarding to their displaced families in central Bosnia.

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HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI
NEVER AGAIN!

On the 50th anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ICRC reminds the international community that the use of weapons of mass destruction, whose effects are by definition indiscriminate, is contrary to international humanitarian law.

In an article published in the French daily Le Monde on 28 July 1995, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga expresses the view that the political environment prompting States to regard nuclear weapons as a deterrent has all but disappeared, while the danger of uncontrolled proliferation - and possible use - of nuclear arms is greater today than ever. It is therefore a matter of urgency for the international community to eliminate the nuclear threat once and for all. The ICRC welcomes the moves made by the United Nations General Assembly to question the legality of this type of weapon.
ICRC delegate Fritz Bilfinger was the first foreigner to reach Hiroshima after the bomb had exploded, and his telegram to the delegation in Tokyo was one of the most dramatic messages in the ICRC’s history. Shortly afterwards Dr Marcel Junod, then head of the ICRC’s Tokyo delegation, published a first-hand account of the effects of the bomb. This document may be obtained from the ICRC’s Press Division in Geneva.

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AFGHANISTAN
FOOD CRISIS IN BADAKHSHAN

To alleviate severe food shortages in Badakhshan province, where many families were found to be on the verge of famine, the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society launched an emergency relief programme in early June. Besides food, wheat, barley and pea seed were distributed to 446 families in 29 villages. An ICRC agronomist has now set up base in Faizabad to follow up the distribution programme on the spot.

The overall situation is particularly bad in the north and north-east of the province where, according to ICRC delegates, people subsist from day to day with no food reserves at all. The terrain is such that communications are very difficult (horses and donkeys are the only means of transport overland), rendering a large-scale aid operation impossible. Deforestation has resulted in numerous landslides and extensive erosion, reducing the already limited area of arable land available.

The ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society have also arranged for the collection and distribution of messages between persons detained in various parts of the country and their relatives in Badakhshan. The Governor of Badakhshan, Sayed Amin Tariq, himself a former detainee in Kabul’s Pul-i-Charki prison, has shown great interest in the message service and stressed the importance of informing families of the whereabouts of their relatives.

The ICRC, which is working in close cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, is at present the only international aid organization active in the region.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

ICRC PRESIDENT ON MISSION

Following the arrival in the Banja Luka region of a great wave of Serb refugees from Krajina, ICRC delegates have worked to meet pressing needs in an extremely tense atmosphere.

The ICRC is concerned by the presence of a large number of armed Serb soldiers among the refugees. Many people belonging to the Croat and Muslim minority groups in the Banja Luka area are reported to have been forced out of their homes by the new arrivals. The ICRC has asked the local authorities to ensure their protection and is in touch with representatives of the affected groups. The ICRC has also informed the Croatian Government of its concern about the plight of tens of thousands people trapped in northern Krajina, near the border town of Dvor, where military operations are in progress.

In order to ensure the delivery of relief supplies for the refugees and to obtain guarantees from the various authorities concerned that all vulnerable persons (those detained or belonging to one of the minorities), ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga set out on 7 August for a one-week visit to the region.

Upon arrival of the first refugees in Banja Luka, the ICRC began distributing food, sanitary supplies and materials for building temporary shelters. It also organized community kitchens and the distribution of drinking water in public places and stepped up its medical assistance to hospitals in the region. Finally, delegates are distributing food and water by the sides of the roads along which there is an uninterrupted flow of people and vehicles.

The relief supplies that had been stocked in Banja Luka before the fighting will suffice to meet the needs for several days only. The ICRC therefore intends to organize an airlift to that part of Bosnia and has received permission for this from all the authorities concerned as well as from the United Nations Sanctions Committee, which supervises implementation of the embargo. The first relief plane is due to land in Banja Luka on 9 August.

In the Krajina town of Knin, the scene of recent military operations, the local ICRC team responded to urgent appeals for assistance from the Croatian authorities and from the United Nations delegation, trapped in its compound with a number of wounded and refugees, and immediately began to tour the streets with enough supplies to treat 300 casualties.
Finally, the Croatian authorities have committed themselves to allowing the ICRC to visit the prisoners of war captured during the present offensive.

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300 BOSNIAN MUSLIMS VISITED IN YUGOSLAVIA

An ICRC team visited 299 men and one woman on 4 August who had fled Zepa, in Bosnia, to seek refuge in Serbia. Following formal authorization from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is housing them in a former children's holiday camp, delegates went to see them and register their identities. Each had an opportunity to write Red Cross messages (personal messages to relatives) and was interviewed in private.

"Their age ranged from 15 to 50", said Josué Anselmo, a delegate on the visiting team. "They looked exhausted since most of them had walked for five days to reach Serbia; they were absolutely determined to flee the war and its effects". The ICRC has received permission for further visits to the group.

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BURUNDI

MORE CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

The ICRC took 21 seriously wounded people (including nine children, five women and two elderly men) to hospital in Bujumbura on 6 August following a number of attacks in the three north-eastern provinces. Among the injured was François, an eight-month-old baby, who lost a leg.

The ICRC is greatly concerned by the high number of civilians who are being killed, wounded or forced to abandon their homes and property after being caught up in fighting or deliberately attacked.

Delegates are endeavouring to alleviate the victims' suffering through constant presence in the field and by providing medical and other emergency supplies, but the ICRC sees daily evidence that the many appeals to spare the civilian population that have been made since the conflict began have failed to have appreciable effects.
In order that other children like François may be preserved from violence in the future, the ICRC delegation in Burundi intends to resume the radio and television campaign carried out last year to promote the basic principles of humanitarian law across a broad range of society, from the military to the man in the street, so that human dignity will be respected in all circumstances.

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MEXICO

ICRC TO END OPERATIONS
IN CHIAPAS

At the invitation of the Mexican Government, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga visited that country from 1 to 4 August. There he met with President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León and with the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Health, the deputy Secretary of the Interior and the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission and senior officials of the Mexican Red Cross.

Mr Sommaruga took the opportunity of these meetings to announce that the ICRC would withdraw all its expatriate staff from the state of Chiapas by September 1995 and would close its office in San Cristóbal de las Casas. The assistance programmes carried out by the ICRC in the region since early 1994 will be continued by the Mexican Red Cross, with which it has enjoyed excellent cooperation from the very outset of the operation.

The ICRC will remain available for as long as necessary to act as a neutral intermediary in the dialogue now under way between the Government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army, and will go on visiting people detained in connection with the events. In addition, the ICRC hopes to launch programmes to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law, in cooperation with the Mexican Red Cross and the government departments concerned.

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Following the fall of Knin and Petrinja, the roads of Bosnia have been flooded with people fleeing towards the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the period of one week, the ICRC has distributed 200 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to almost 100,000 Serb refugees spread out over 400 kilometres.

This wave of refugees, among whom are a number of armed men, has jeopardized the safety of Croat and Muslim minorities living in the region. The ICRC has asked the authorities to assume their responsibilities and to take all the measures necessary to guarantee the safety of those minorities. Acts of brutality nevertheless continue. People are being expelled from their homes by force and there are reports of murders and ill-treatment. It is obvious that the measures taken by the authorities to protect the minorities are inadequate.

The ICRC has had discussions with representatives of these minorities and all other parties involved to raise awareness of their plight and remind those concerned of their responsibilities. Because of the present threat to life and limb, the ICRC has asked that the minorities be allowed to leave under dignified and secure conditions. Moreover, each individual should have the opportunity to inform a neutral body whether he wants to leave the area, and families should not be separated upon departure. The ICRC is prepared to monitor this process.

Visits to detainees and assistance to displaced people in Croatia

ICRC delegates have continued visiting Croatian Serbs being held by the Croatian authorities. By 14 August they had registered more than 500 of these detainees.

In Knin, the ICRC has been the only organization permitted by the Croatian authorities to move freely. After 36 hours in shelters, the team emerged to distribute medical supplies at Knin hospital and the UN compound. Tents, blankets and food were also delivered to the around 800 people who had sought refuge in the compound.

After Bosnian government troops regained control of Velika Kladusa, around 20,000 people fled to Croatia. They are staying, unable to go further, in a makeshift camp close to Vojnic. The ICRC has provided this group with food, medical and sanitation supplies. Bladder tanks have been set up in the camp. Delegates and a nurse are staying there in order to monitor the situation and deliver surgical supplies and drugs. If more clean water and medicine is not brought to these people, the situation could deteriorate rapidly and a major threat to health could develop.

In eastern Slavonia, women, children and elderly people from the affected areas have fled to safer places along the Danube, where they are staying in unused schools. Despite the dangerous conditions and high level of tension, delegates have managed to assess the needs
and distribute food, blankets and hygiene items to 1,600 persons. In the main Vukovar hospital, 1,500 food rations have been delivered for 250 patients as well as surgical assistance for the wounded.

The missing from Srebrenica and Zepa

Slow progress is being made in establishing what has happened to those missing from Srebrenica and Zepa. The ICRC has gathered nearly 10,000 allegations of arrest and disappearance from displaced people who were brought to Tuzla and Zenica. These allegations are being cross-checked. Families whose menfolk have rejoined them after making their way independently to territory held by the Bosnian government are being asked to inform their local Red Cross branch or the ICRC. Until people who have died in the fighting can be found and identified, and until all the men interned by the Bosnian Serbs have been visited by the ICRC, it will be impossible to ascertain with accuracy the fate of the missing.

Assistance to those displaced in Bosnian government-held territory

ICRC delegates in Tuzla and Zenica are providing humanitarian assistance to the estimated 30,000 persons displaced from Zepa and Srebrenica. Deliveries of emergency relief supplies last week included six tonnes of wheat flour, 1,000 individual parcels (canned meat and cheese, sugar, oil and hygienic items) and hundreds of ready-to-eat meals, blankets and kitchen utensils.

Following the ICRC’s success last week in sending two convoys with much needed medical and other relief into Sarajevo, efforts will be made in the coming days to bring in emergency water and sanitation equipment as well as additional medicines from Zenica.

Budget extension

On 10 August 1995, the ICRC approved a budget extension of 30 million Swiss francs (26 million US dollars), bringing the total budget for its operations in the region to 112 million francs (96.5 millions dollars). There are 160 expatriates and 800 locally hired staff currently working in the region.

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SOMALIA

HUNGRY IN KISMAYO
HOMELESS AROUND BURAO

Food assistance to Kismayo

Kismayo, isolated both politically and economically, is having ever greater difficulty feeding itself. Displaced people and others recently returned from Kenya constitute particularly vulnerable groups whose presence is placing a strain on an already precarious situation. Faced with signs of severe malnutrition, the ICRC distributed 250 tonnes of sorghum, beans and vegetable oil to 12,500 displaced persons in Kismayo on 9 August 1995. There are indications that further needs can be expected.

Acute needs in Somaliland

When fighting erupted in the town of Burao last March, thousands of civilians fled to surrounding areas. In July, a survey showed that people from both sides displaced by the continuing clashes lacked shelter. Last week, the ICRC therefore distributed blankets and plastic sheeting to serve as temporary protection from the elements for 125,000 persons in 170 villages to the south and north of Burao as well as in the Odweyne district. In addition, two tonnes of medical assistance have been delivered to the hospitals in Beer and Odweyne, where war wounded are being treated.

Relief operation continues in Juba Valley and Hiran area

ICRC relief distributions are continuing in the lower Juba Valley where displaced people are facing serious food shortages. Over 13,000 persons from 11 villages in the Marere area received seed and food in mid-July. Since June, when distributions started in the region, the ICRC has assisted 45,000 families with 750 tonnes of food, 45 tonnes of seed and fishing equipment. In the Hiran and central Shabelle regions, 10,000 families received similar assistance.

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AFGHANISTAN

EMERGENCY RELIEF

On 4 and 5 August, an ICRC team based in Herat carried out a survey in Badghis province, where fighting had intensified between the forces of Ismail Khan and General Dostom's Jumbesh party. The team estimated that 4,000 families, or about 20,000 persons,
had been forced out of their homes in the town of Morghab and taken refuge in Qala-I-Now and the surrounding villages. Many of them had to abandon everything but what they were wearing. After walking for three to four days in hot weather, the victims were suffering from exhaustion and dehydration.

On 4 August, ICRC delegates and members of the Afghan Red Crescent Society brought jerrycans to Qala-I-Now and filled them with drinking water for the newly arrived. On 11 August, after a two-day journey, a convoy carrying 500 kitchen sets and 150 tonnes of wheat flour, rice, beans, oil, salt, sugar and tea arrived in Qala-I-Now from Herat. An initial round of food distributions was scheduled to start on 13 August.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
BIHAC REGION: THE FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

After territories previously controlled by Fikret Abdic were taken over by Bosnian troops from Bihac on 7 August last, more than 20,000 Muslims fled Velika Kladusa heading for Vojnic in Croatia. They are clustered along seven kilometres of road and are surviving thanks to an ICRC emergency operation. Despite the aid provided by ICRC delegates in terms of medical care, food and hygiene, these people are living in very precarious conditions. They have for example only about fifty houses in which to seek shelter.

For more than a fortnight the ICRC, which fears for the safety of these people, has had two delegates constantly present among them. In particular, 'it urges that they be evacuated to places of their own choice and not be sent back by force. For those who may decide to return home, the ICRC requests firm guarantees that there will absolutely be no reprisals against them.

Since the ICRC began assisting this group of refugees, more than 1,300 Red Cross messages have been exchanged between them and their relatives who remained in Velika Kladusa.

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ZAIRE/RWANDA/BURUNDI
ICRC VOICES ACUTE ANXIETY

The ICRC is very concerned about developments in the refugee camps in Zaire.

Most of the thousands of refugees being forcibly expelled to Rwanda and Burundi by the Zairian army are women and children. ICRC delegates in the UNHCR transit camps in Gisenyi, Kamembe and Gatumba have observed that several families have been split up by these recent events. Unaccompanied children have arrived there and the ICRC has taken care to register them. It is also giving all people who have been expelled the possibility to write Red Cross messages to relatives who are still in Zaire.

In addition, the ICRC has begun registering people arrested by the Rwandan authorities.

The ICRC will today try to send medical supplies to the Mungunga hospital in Zaire.

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**RWANDA**

**CONTINUED ICRC SUPPORT FOR RURAL POPULATION**

In preparation for the next farming season, which begins in September, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is gearing up to distribute seed, implements and food to more than 63,000 families in southern Rwanda.

Since last autumn the ICRC, which has been working in the country since 1990 and remained active there at the height of the massacres last year, has been carrying out an agricultural rehabilitation programme in aid of more than 270,000 families.

Although most of the Rwandan population are now self-sufficient, needs still exist in the south of the country where many families lost everything during last year's tragedy. Other families have returned home virtually destitute from Uganda, Burundi, Zaire or the camps for displaced persons which were closed in April 1995.

From the end of August, the ICRC will be distributing bean seed and hoes to 63,000 families in seven areas in the south of the country (other humanitarian organizations are taking care of other regions). This should enable each family to harvest about 100 kg of beans early next year. They will also be given some additional food - maize, beans, oil and salt - so that they do not keep up their strength for the arduous task of tilling fields by consuming the seed itself.

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**IRAN**

**100 IRAQI PRISONERS OF WAR SET FREE**

On 18 August, 100 Iraqi prisoners of war were released by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to mark the birthday of the Prophet. Most of them had been captured at the outset of the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988).

The release took place at the Mundharieh-Khosravi checkpoint at the border between the two countries and in the presence of ICRC delegates. The prisoners had been registered after being captured. During an ICRC visit in October and November 1993, more than 1,200 Iraqi prisoners of war had confirmed their willingness to be repatriated.

Since 20 August 1988, when the cease-fire between the belligerents came into force, only 82,000 of the approximately 100,000 prisoners of war known to the ICRC have been released and repatriated.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
SARAJEVO: FOOD CRISIS LOOMING

As winter approaches, there is widespread concern about the difficulty of getting sufficient amounts of food and other essential supplies into Sarajevo. Political controversy over the opening of routes into the city and delays in obtaining clearance for humanitarian convoys are only two of the many problems that the ICRC and other international organizations have faced in recent weeks when trying to truck in goods meant for all parts of the city. The airlift, suspended for security reasons since March, seems unlikely to resume, at least in the near future.

The ICRC's buffer stock of individual parcels, food rations and other supplies (candles, blankets, hygiene kits, etc.) is severely depleted. These reserves must be replenished during the coming weeks to avoid further disruption to ongoing relief programmes and to build up sufficient stocks for any unforeseen emergency.

A plan to dispatch 24 consignments by road from the ICRC warehouse in Zenica over the next two weeks has already fallen behind schedule: only four shipments of relief, medical, and water and sanitation supplies have been brought into Sarajevo since 18 August owing to clearance and routing problems. Should the current difficulties persist, tens of thousands of already destitute and highly vulnerable people will face their fourth winter of deprivation.

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ICRC DELEGATES VISIT RUSSIAN SOLDIERS
DETAINED BY CHECHENS

On 20 August 1995 ICRC delegates visited nine Russian soldiers detained by Chechen fighters. This is the first time since the end of March that the ICRC has had access to persons held by the Chechen side. The ICRC team, which included a doctor, conducted the visit in accordance with the organization's standard procedures and it is hoped that a follow-up visit will take place shortly.

Meanwhile ICRC delegates are continuing their visits to detainees held in places under Russian federal authority. Over 500 people detained in connection with the Chechen conflict have been seen on both sides since the outbreak of hostilities.

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ANGOLA
SEEDS OF LIFE

In September the ICRC will begin distributing seed to 150,000 families in the Huambo and Ganda regions of Angola. A preliminary round of distributions (mainly tomato, onion, cabbage and carrot seeds) was carried out in June, during the dry season, in valleys where there was still enough water.

The second series of distributions will begin just before the rainy season, this time involving legume, cereal, bean and peanut seeds. Weather permitting, the harvest early next year will produce enough food to enable almost 600,000 people to regain a measure of self-sufficiency.

The total cost of the programme, which is being carried out in cooperation with Angolan agronomists, will amount to three million US dollars.

An ICRC team set up this agricultural rehabilitation programme following a survey conducted earlier this year. Although the situation has improved since 1994, food shortages persist in several areas of the Planalto, partly because of military operations that took place during last year’s planting season.

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The ICRC is pleased to announce the opening of its World Wide Web site on the Internet, which may be accessed from 4 September 1995 at http://www.icrc.ch

Information (press releases, fact-sheets, in-depth articles, illustrated brochures, position papers, etc.) will be available on a wide range of issues related to conflict and conflict victims, and on the role, activities and concerns of the ICRC.

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

On 5 September the ICRC officially handed over the installations it had just completed at the Nsinda detention centre to the Rwandan Ministry of Justice. The ICRC's work consisted in providing decent quarters for 5,000 detainees, including water supply systems, sanitation and kitchen facilities, and a dispensary. The walls were built and the security infrastructure set up by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Mission in Rwanda, in cooperation with the Rwandan government.

The transfer of detainees to this new temporary detention centre will hopefully alleviate the severe overcrowding which is the main cause of death in places of detention in Rwanda. "The opening of the Nsinda centre will be a first step to improve material conditions, but other sites urgently need to be set up by the government to prevent further worsening of the humanitarian crisis", said ICRC head of delegation in Rwanda, Philippe Lazzarini.

More than 52,000 detainees are currently being visited by ICRC delegates in 220 detention facilities. They are being held in appalling conditions, with up to four people per square metre in some places. Many inmates have not been able to lie down for months and a lot of them suffer from oedema and gangrene in their feet and legs.

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BEIJING
WOMEN IN WAR

Because women - and children - are all too often the primary non-military victims of conflict, the ICRC has sent a delegation to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women being held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September. In addition to the obvious perils of war, women are especially vulnerable to violence from undisciplined soldiers and in conflicts where the main aim is to exterminate a given ethnic or cultural group.

The ICRC wishes to take this opportunity to remind the international community and in particular the world's States of their obligation under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their 1977 Additional Protocols to protect every non-combatant from war-related violence.

Despite the suffering they endure, women in times of war have frequently had to shoulder the burden of feeding their families and even take on responsibility for industrial production in their communities.
The ICRC delegation to the Beijing Conference is led by Mrs Renée Guisan, a member of the organization's Committee.

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**KUWAIT**

**MISSING PEOPLE: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

As agreed by the Tripartite Commission, made up of representatives of Iraq, Kuwait and the other Coalition members (France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States), the Commission's Technical Sub-Committee met in its fifth session on 29 and 30 August 1995 to discuss the issue of people still missing after the Gulf War.

For the first time since the creation of the Technical Sub-Committee in December 1994, the meeting took place in the demilitarized zone close to the border between Iraq and Kuwait, at Camp Khor, a UNIKOM base on Kuwaiti territory. Under the chairmanship of the ICRC, six delegates from the Republic of Iraq, six from the State of Kuwait and eight from the Coalition discussed the whereabouts of more than 600 Kuwaiti citizens and nationals of other countries reported missing after the end of the Gulf War. The meeting focused on technical matters and ended with all parties signing a document summarizing the proceedings.

The parties involved agreed to meet again at the end of September for another session of the Technical Sub-Committee, to be held this time on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone.

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**GENEVA**

**ICRC FACING 153 MILLION SWISS FRANC SHORTFALL**

In order to cover its expenditure for ongoing operations in around 60 countries worldwide, the ICRC has just launched a new appeal for 153 million Swiss francs (126 million US dollars) to the donor community. In a meeting with permanent missions at the organization's Geneva headquarters, the Director of Operations, Mr Jean de Courten, underscored the crucial need for the ICRC's activities and said that additional funds were desperately required if the ICRC was to succeed in fulfilling the clear mandate entrusted to it by the international community. The ICRC head of Communications and External Resources, Mr Christian Kornevall, added that the institution must take all possible steps to avoid being caught in a vicious circle. "This is what will happen if we end the year with a deficit of several million US dollars", he explained.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

SREBRENICA: HELP FOR FAMILIES STILL AWAITING NEWS

The ICRC's head of operations for Western Europe, Angelo Gnaedinger, visited Pale and Belgrade from 2 to 7 September to obtain information from the Bosnian Serb authorities about the 3,000 persons from Srebrenica whom witnesses say were arrested by Bosnian Serb forces. The ICRC has asked for access as soon as possible to all those arrested (so far it has been able to visit only about 200 detainees), and for details of any deaths.

The ICRC has also approached the Bosnia-Herzegovina authorities seeking information on some 5,000 individuals who fled Srebrenica, some of whom reached central Bosnia.

After the fall of the enclave, the ICRC received over 10,000 requests for family news from civilians who were transferred to Tuzla in central Bosnia. About 2,000 of these requests were from different family members seeking the same individuals. An in-depth analysis has shown that the remaining 8,000 requests fall into two categories: about 5,000 concern individuals who apparently fled the enclave before it fell, while the remaining 3,000 relate to persons reportedly arrested by the Bosnian Serb forces.

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AFGHANISTAN

ICRC TAKES ACTION IN HERAT

Following the fall of Herat province to the Taliban militia on 5 September, ICRC delegates based there immediately contacted the new authorities with a view to meeting urgent humanitarian needs, particularly in the medical field. They also sought access to prisoners being held by the Taliban and obtained permission in principle for a series of visits in the near future to prisoners captured during the recent offensive.

Well before the latest fighting the ICRC had built up stocks of medicines and other emergency medical supplies in Herat, and was thus able to provide assistance where needed to both the civilian and the military hospital in the city. A number of wounded Taliban fighters were evacuated to the first-aid post set up by the ICRC near Kandahar last June. From there the most serious cases were taken across the border to the ICRC surgical hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, which has treated almost 200 new patients in the past two weeks. Over 13,000 war-wounded have been admitted so far this year to ICRC-supported hospitals in Afghanistan and Quetta.

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TAJIKISTAN
RETURNING HOME FROM GORNO-BADAKHSHAN

In Tajikistan, 3,000 displaced persons have returned to their homes from the semi-autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan as a result of a government operation that began in March 1995. To facilitate their return and reintegration, the ICRC worked with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to set up three temporary shelters along the road between Khorog, in Gorno-Badakhshan, and the Tajik capital Dushanbe. The operation was repeatedly delayed by precarious security conditions and bad weather in which mountain passes were closed by heavy snowfalls.

Tens of thousands of people fled the civil war in late 1992 and headed for the Garm valley, Gorno-Badakhshan and Afghanistan. Since 1993, the ICRC has been assisting displaced persons returning to their homes.

The ICRC is still hoping that the agreements reached under UN auspices in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in May 1995 will be implemented. These agreements mainly provide for the simultaneous release of persons detained in connection with the conflict, a measure that would serve to restore confidence between the parties concerned.

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BURUNDI
WATER - THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Owing to the deliberate destruction of major water-supply networks during the internal conflict that has been raging in Burundi, 100,000 residents and displaced civilians on the Imbo plain north-west of Bujumbura have been without drinking water since mid-August. For security reasons, repairs to the damaged systems have been impossible. To make matters worse, the onset of the rainy season (September-October) has caused a resurgence of endemic diseases, such as cholera and dysentery, especially in an area on the outskirts of the capital.

In an effort to stem the spread of disease, the ICRC has been providing the population with drinking water over the last three weeks and has set up a mobile clinic. Some 50,000 litres of water are now being delivered to seven locations every day, and the programme will shortly be made more effective by the arrival of two mobile water purification units. Owing to the lack of security, however, the ICRC is unable to meet all the needs for drinking water in the region.

The ICRC reminds all parties to the conflict that access to drinking water is essential to survival, and under no circumstances should it be deliberately denied.

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WESTERN BOSNIA
EXODUS TO BANJA LUKA: DISPLACED PEOPLE IN URGENT NEED

Over 70,000 people fled to the Banja Luka region after renewed fighting broke out in western Bosnia. Within days of the onset of this new humanitarian crisis, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the only international organization operating in the region, had set up six mobile teams to provide food, blankets and other essentials to the tens of thousands of displaced civilians gathered in five municipalities around Banja Luka.

Every day ICRC trucks loaded with relief supplies travel to and fro between Zagreb and Belgrade. From Belgrade, other convoys regularly head for Banja Luka. In this way the ICRC mobile teams made at least one visit on 18 and 19 September to the towns of Prijedor (30,000 displaced persons), Bosanski Brod (17,000), Celinac (12,000), Derventa (10,000), Laktasi (5,000), Banja Luka and Doboj, taking in assistance for the displaced persons. Outside the towns, emergency relief supplies were distributed to over 10,000 other people thanks to the voluntary help of many Banja Luka university students, who spontaneously offered their services to the ICRC.

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THE ICRC AND THE FRENCH PILOTS - CLARIFICATION

The French government, represented by its ambassador in Geneva, has officially requested the ICRC to find out what has happened to the two pilots of an aircraft that was shot down over western Bosnia. The ICRC has already expressed its concern about them and will now intensify its efforts to that effect. ICRC assistance for persons detained in connection with military operations consists of requesting the authorities concerned to allow its delegates regular access to detainees so they can register their identity, interview them in private to check on conditions of detention, and give them the opportunity to write to their families.

YEMEN
CARE FOR MENTALLY ILL IN PRISONS

In 1995, ICRC delegates visiting prisons in Yemen came across hundreds of mentally ill detainees housed in appalling conditions. Some were even found to be living naked or simply wrapped in blankets. Destitute, most of them had no access to psychiatric or even basic medical and nursing care. On several occasions, the ICRC drew the attention of the authorities concerned to their plight. It was impossible, however, to transfer them to proper
psychiatric institutions. In August 1995, the ICRC therefore launched a special programme in Sana'a Prison for some 200 mentally ill detainees.

This programme included the refurbishing of part of the section housing these detainees and renovation of the sanitary facilities and the outdoor recreation area. After organizing regular basic care (hygiene, food and clothing), the ICRC hired a Yemeni psychiatrist who, together with a nurse and assisted by a team of volunteers from the Yemen Red Crescent Society, will carry out a complete check-up of all mentally ill detainees and make sure that they are given adequate nursing and medical and psychiatric treatment. This team will also seek to provide an environment conducive to a resumption of some form of social activity.

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CHECHNYA
A TECHNICAL CHALLENGE FOR THE ICRC

As winter approaches, most of Grozny's 320,000 inhabitants still have no access to running water. This situation, which has already existed for some 10 months and is likely to continue, pits the ICRC against a technical challenge. According to Alain Oppliger, an ICRC sanitation engineer who has just returned from Grozny, this is the first time the institution has had to distribute drinking water on such a wide scale under such harsh climatic conditions. "We thought the water mains would be back in working order by winter", he said. "Most of our experience has been acquired in warm climates, and we shall now have to adapt and find technical solutions to protect our equipment from frost."

The ICRC, in coordination with MSF-Belgium, is currently providing the population with 700,000 litres of drinking water daily at 52 distribution points. The water is transported by 34 tanker trucks, for only a few districts are fortunate enough to have been reconnected to the seriously damaged mains. The ICRC emergency programme also succeeded in staving off cholera epidemics during the summer months.

In February 1995, after many of the drinking water facilities were destroyed by the fighting that swept across the region, the ICRC sent a first team of sanitation engineers to the northern Caucasus to tackle the most urgent problems. Today, four engineers and 35 local employees are working to improve the water supply systems in Grozny and southern Chechnya, where installations in many villages were also damaged during the hostilities.

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In the two weeks that have elapsed since its inception on 4 September, the ICRC World Wide Web has received over 18,000 calls from over 1,000 site locations - including US military institutions, universities around the world, non-governmental organizations and (even) mere individuals. The great majority of calls (still) originate from the US, followed by Switzerland, the UK, Australia, the Netherlands and Germany. So the message is clear: if you're both techno-aware and humanity-conscious, plug in on

http://www.icrc.ch

and see humanitarian action unfold at your fingertips.

Struggling with the connections? Phone (gasp!) Karen Saddler on ++ 4122 730 2391 and all will be revealed.
UN CONFERENCE IN VIENNA
LANDMINES MUST BE STOPPED!
AND VIENNA IS THE PLACE TO DO IT

What is said, and more important still, what is decided in Vienna within the next three weeks will be crucial for hundreds of thousands of potential landmine victims. From 25 September to 13 October, representatives from over one hundred countries will be discussing amendments to the existing 1980 United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, a treaty that includes provisions on landmines. Over the past few decades, the number of civilians - including women and children - maimed or killed by landmines in all parts of the world has increased dramatically. For the ICRC, whose President, Cornelio Sommaruga, addressed the Vienna conference on Tuesday, the toll taken reached unacceptable proportions long ago.

According to Mr Sommaruga, the conference "is the moment for States to face their responsibilities and to take action which they know will be effective in the shortest possible time". The ICRC is concerned that the measures proposed at the conference - centring on self-destruct mechanisms - will prove inefficient and impossible to monitor. Furthermore, the "grace period" requested by some States to allow them time to adapt their current stocks of anti-personnel landmines could run into decades and hundreds of thousands of new victims.

Finally, Mr Sommaruga made a forceful plea for an immediate ban on an equally terrifying device now ready for mass production in a number of countries: blinding laser weapons. Using an undetectable and invisible laser beam, these can cause permanent blindness within a split second.

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ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES
BREAKING NEW GROUND

On 21 September, officials from the "Magen David Adom" (MDA, Red Shield of David) and the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society" (PRCS) met in Jerusalem. The meeting, held under the auspices of the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, was hosted by Professor Barzilai, President of the MDA, and attended by a delegation headed by Dr Fathi Arafat, President of the PRCS. Although the two men had met on previous occasions, it was the first time that their organizations had come together to discuss operational matters and to explore ways and means of cooperating in the future.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
ICRC RETURNS TO THE SERB-CONTROLLED PARTS OF SARAJEVO

Last week, the ICRC became the first humanitarian organization to visit the Bosnian Serb-controlled parts of Sarajevo since the recent NATO air strikes. ICRC teams on assessment and distribution missions visited first the districts of Hadzici, Vogošća, Ilijaš and Iliđza, where 120 rolls of plastic sheeting, 1,500 blankets and 4,700 candles were given to local Red Cross organizations for people affected by the recent Bosnian government military operations and by the air strikes.

Later on, ICRC delegates visited the Bosnian Serb-controlled suburbs of Grbavica, Lukavica and Vojkovici, where 1,500 blankets and 20 rolls of plastic sheeting were given to the local Red Cross. Sanitation equipment was issued to the local water board to help repair key water distribution installations in Grbavica and at the Kasično hospital. Deliveries of ICRC medical supplies were also made to the Kasično and Blazuj hospitals and to first-aid posts, other medical facilities and to the home for the elderly in Nedzarici. Meanwhile, the ICRC/German Red Cross community kitchen and school snacks programmes are expected to resume throughout the city in early October.

Elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ICRC is active on both sides of the front lines. Relief teams, ferrying emergency food and medical supplies, have gone from Bihac to Bosanska Krupa, Ključ and Petrovac. In the Banja Luka region, the ICRC has met the most pressing needs of some 120,000 people displaced by the current fighting.

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RWANDA
HELPING PARENTS TRACE LOST CHILDREN

After the horrific events of 1994, close to 80,000 children in Rwanda and neighbouring countries, currently living in orphanages and refugee camps or with foster families, are still listed as "unaccompanied". Since most of them are without news of their families, the ICRC has stepped up its efforts to find their parents or other relatives.

In cooperation with Save the Children (UK) and local authorities, ICRC delegates take lists with names of such children to community meetings in villages where the children lived before the war. The lists are read aloud, and often, somebody recognizes a name: "Many parents have given up hope that their children may still be alive and have simply stopped searching for them", says ICRC tracing coordinator Elizabeth Twinch, "Since these people do not come to the ICRC offices to see whether we have information about their children, we have to look for parents in their home communities." When a connection is made between a parent or relatives and a given child, the ICRC arranges to bring them together.
At this stage, teams visit villages in the prefectures of Ruhengeri and Kigali Rural but the ICRC hopes soon to cover the whole of Rwanda. These visits are also excellent opportunities to reach out to unaccompanied children who have still not been registered by the ICRC.

Further information: Nina Winquist, ICRC, Kigali, tel. ++ 250 72781/5
René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 2265
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
ICRC FIRST TO REACH GLAMOC

ICRC delegates were the first international aid workers to enter the western Bosnian town of Glamoc after it fell to Bosnian Croat forces on 28 July, according to town mayor Krezo. Glamoc had suffered considerable damage and there had been widespread looting. "It's clear that there was a lot of destruction during the recent offensive", said Lise Boudreault, deputy head of the ICRC's delegation in central Bosnia, "but there are signs that life is returning to the town". Local people have started to carry out basic repairs on their homes.

The town's infrastructure is still relatively intact, according to the mayor. The water is drinkable, the sewerage system is working, and electricity is being supplied to the hospital and other essential facilities. Although the postal service is also functioning, the authorities want the ICRC to set up tracing and Red Cross message services as soon as possible so that members of dispersed families can keep in touch with each other.

So far some 500 people, mainly elderly civilians uprooted from the Banja Luka area, have made their way to Glamoc. The Bosnian Croat authorities are expecting an additional 2,000 displaced persons to take up permanent residence there in the near future.

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AFGHANISTAN
HOPE FOR SURVIVAL

Six months after they began, the agricultural rehabilitation programmes conducted by the ICRC in large areas of central Afghanistan (Kabul, Logar, Wardak, Ghazni, Bamyan and Badakhshan provinces) have just been assessed for the first time. According to Peter Stocker, head of the ICRC delegation in Kabul, they are having a major impact.

For example, in the country's desert regions the population depends on irrigation for its survival. Under the supervision of ICRC agronomists, wells have been sunk, irrigation ditches repaired and karezes (underground irrigation systems) put back into operation. Local villagers have been mobilized to help restore dozens of kilometres of irrigation channels, and this has considerably increased the area of land under cultivation. "After a succession of wars, these village people can at last see a glimmer of hope", said Nouri, an Afghan agronomist working for the ICRC.

After an analysis of eating habits carried out by an ICRC nutritionist revealed the importance of dried fruit in the Afghans' winter diet, 200,000 trees were treated against disease and infestation by insects and hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fruit were saved.
These activities, carried out jointly with the Afghan Red Crescent, are taking place on all sides of the front lines.

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ZAIRE
MASISI - A FORGOTTEN CONFLICT

The ICRC has launched a programme in Masisi, a mountainous region of Kivu province, north-west of the town of Goma, to assist people displaced by the interethnic strife that has prevailed in the area since March 1993. Initially, the clashes pitched indigenous ethnic groups against Rwandan immigrants who had settled in Zaire before its independence. Since July 1994, however, the conflict has assumed a new dimension with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees in Kivu, a development that has made it easier to bring weapons into the region.

On 23 September an ICRC team arrived in one Masisi village just after it had been attacked, and found 25 bodies and 17 burnt-out houses. The ICRC estimates that there were over 200 killings in Masisi during the month of July alone. The outside world is largely unaware of this conflict raging on the Rwanda-Zaire border, partly because of the inaccessibility of the region and partly because it has been eclipsed by the plight of the Rwandan refugees. It is nonetheless one of the factors in the crisis affecting the whole of the Great Lakes region.

The ICRC is distributing relief supplies, mainly blankets, hoes, cooking pots and jerrycans, to almost 150,000 displaced people in Masisi. The aim is to enable them to resettle in other villages or, better still, to help them return home.

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ANGOLA
NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR AMPUTEES

This week the ICRC reopened its orthopaedic centre in Bomba Alta, on the outskirts of Huambo, introducing new polypropylene technology to Angola. The centre, which began to operate in 1979, had to be shut down at the end of 1992 owing to violence in the area.

Polypropylene - a thermoplastic resin - is easy to transport and store since it comes in sheets, which are then heated in an oven and shaped into artificial limbs. "We previously used liquid polyester, to which chemicals had to be added. Problems often cropped up with airline companies when we tried to import these substances", explained Alain Garachon, who is in charge of ICRC rehabilitation programmes for the war disabled. Polypropylene is used to manufacture sockets and various components of prostheses, such as artificial feet, knees or other parts, which are made at the centre and cast in aluminium or bronze moulds imported from Switzerland. The new technology is far less expensive than earlier methods, especially since polypropylene can be melted down and reused several times, and the ICRC has now introduced it to all 15 countries where it runs orthopaedic programmes.

In Angola, according to Alain Garachon, there are already 20,000 amputees who need to be fitted, and the UN estimates that 9 to 15 million unexploded mines remain scattered across the country. "The nightmare of mines will continue in Angola for decades to come and the only hope for its people, who have borne this scourge far too long, is that tangible results will emerge from the Review Conference of the 1980 UN weapons convention, which is now taking place in Vienna", said Michel Dufour, head of the ICRC’s delegation in Luanda.

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The ICRC’s radio broadcasting service is back on the air again. The programmes resumed in late September after a six-month suspension. Five-minute broadcasts go out each week in a different language at the end of Swiss Radio International short-wave transmissions. They are beamed to various geographical areas, the first week in English, the second in French and the third in German, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The fourth week is in Spanish, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. There is also a Portuguese-language programme, broadcast by Portugal’s international station in Lisbon and by Swiss Radio International.

The ICRC also intends to produce 15-minute feature programmes in all five languages. A series in English on the former Yugoslavia has already come out. Radio stations interested in receiving these various programmes on tape or on cassette for rebroadcasting in their respective regions should contact the ICRC’s radio service in Geneva or one of the ICRC’s delegations on the spot.

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Jean-Pierre Abel, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2021

In the run-up to the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which is due to take place in Geneva from 3 to 7 December 1995, the Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, the President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, and the President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mario Enrique Villarroel Lander, will take part in a joint press conference on Thursday 9 November 1995 at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva. Invitations will be sent out in due course.
AFGHANISTAN
HIGH NUMBER OF CASUALTIES

The recent fighting in the southern suburbs of Kabul has taken a heavy toll among both government and Taliban forces. Since the Taliban attack began on Tuesday, 10 October, more than 600 people have been treated in the first-aid posts set up to the south of Kabul and in hospitals inside the Afghan capital. "The number of casualties is certainly even higher since not all wounded people have been able to reach medical facilities", said Peter Iseli, an ICRC delegate in Kabul. Never before in the 16 years of conflict in Afghanistan has the ICRC hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, to which front-line casualties have been transferred, had to deal with such a large number of inpatients (213) at the same time. "So far the civilian population of Kabul has been largely spared; only one rocket has hit the centre of the capital", reported Iseli. The ICRC delegation has managed in recent days to furnish all medical facilities on both sides with supplies sufficient to last several weeks. Additional supplies are being flown into the capital every day on board an ICRC aircraft. One major problem nevertheless remains: a serious shortage of blood for transfusion.

Several hundred people have in the meantime fled southern Kabul and taken refuge with family and friends in the centre of the city. If the situation remains tense, however, public buildings will have to be opened to accommodate the displaced. The Afghan Red Crescent Society has already drawn up a plan to assist these people, with the help of the ICRC. This is particularly necessary in view of the approaching winter. Red Cross warehouses are well stocked for the time being but a way must very soon be found to bring in further supplies by road; a commercial convoy with 200 tonnes of wheat flour purchased by the ICRC for Kabul has been brought to a standstill by the fighting.

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REPAIRING UNDERGROUND IRRIGATION CHANNELS

Despite fighting in southern Kabul, a programme to repair underground irrigation channels is being continued. The ICRC's agricultural team has carried out a mission to the Wardak and Ghazny area outside Kabul to distribute more tools for this essential restoration work being performed by the local population. The channels, which have been destroyed over the years of fighting, are indispensable for regular irrigation of the orchards and fields in the area. In all, 12 channels are currently under repair. During the recent mission, some 500 pairs of shears and 180 kilos of insecticide were distributed to local farmers. A similar programme was started during the summer months in provinces north of Kabul. "This is part of the ICRC's emergency agricultural aid programme", explained the agro-team leader, Mr R. Noori. "We want the local population to take an active part and, if possible, to be self-sufficient even during wartime".

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
HOSPITALS IN DESPERATE NEED

The latest offensives in the Sanski Most area have resulted in a growing number of wounded people requiring immediate surgery. Surgeons in Banja Luka have been working around the clock, said Ingrid Anderson, an ICRC nurse there. Distributions of surgical supplies in recent days to three hospitals in the Banja Luka area have allowed some 1,500 additional operations to be performed. This assistance is desperately needed. "Help delayed is help denied", said Dr Stanesic, head of the surgery department at Banja Luka hospital. Distributions have also been carried out to the hospital in Prijedor and dispensaries treating newly displaced people, as well as to Doboj hospital, where a large number of war wounded have been admitted following fighting in the Mount Ozren area.

In the Bihac area, meanwhile, on the other side of the front line, needs among the civilian population are also acute. "We are particularly concerned about those people in the smaller, more remote communities", said Claudia Scholer, head of the ICRC team in Bihac. "We have yet to reach many of them, who have been isolated owing to recent military developments". Over the last three weeks the ICRC has been providing emergency medical assistance and material relief to civilians who were expelled from the Banja Luka region and are now living in Bosanski Petrovac (2,700 people) and Kljuc (2,000).

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COLOMBIA
VIOLENCE IN URABÁ

Abject poverty, the absence of social services and clashes between various armed groups are the main factors that have unleashed a deadly wave of violence in Urabá, one of Colombia's most prosperous areas.

Since the beginning of this year, over 100 people have been killed in senseless massacres and about 700 more in isolated incidents in this banana-producing region in the north-west of the country, near the border with Panama. This has prompted the ICRC, in pursuance of its basic mandate, to increase the number of delegates on the spot to four in an effort to reach the scattered civilian population and the warring parties more directly so as to spread knowledge and promote observance of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC delegates are also visiting persons detained in connection with the conflict, helping to contact separated family members, exchanging messages between them and distributing relief supplies to people displaced by the violence.

Although the problems in Urabá are extremely complex owing to the large number of parties to the conflict and the different interests involved, the ICRC is carrying out its task of protecting the victims in complete impartiality and working for the application of international humanitarian law, so vital in this type of situation.

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SIERRA LEONE
SERIOUS MALNUTRITION IN THE REBEL REGIONS

A survey conducted by an ICRC team in May and June 1995 revealed serious cases of malnutrition among the population of Kailahun, a region controlled by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). "The children are suffering the most", explained Georges Paclisanu, head of the ICRC's regional delegation in Abidjan. Steps were thus taken to obtain permission from both the government of Sierra Leone and the guerrilla forces to deliver food and rice seed to the region. The government has not yet given the go-ahead. It must do so urgently, for the nutritional situation has undoubtedly worsened since the survey.

The ICRC is also concerned about the humanitarian situation in those government-held towns which were cut off for several months, and has sent a team to Kenema, Koidu and Bo in the eastern part of the country to evaluate the population's needs. It is now attempting to extend this survey to the towns of Daru and Segbwema, near the Liberian border.

The ICRC is pursuing its discussions with the government so as to obtain permission to work wherever war-related humanitarian needs are likely to occur. Under international humanitarian law, the parties to the conflict are obliged to let the civilian population receive the supplies necessary for their survival.

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AFGHANISTAN
SEEKING SAFETY IN KABUL

Almost 8,000 inhabitants of several districts south of the Afghan capital have left their homes as the front line between Taliban and government forces moved closer, with occasional artillery fire wreaking havoc in civilian areas. The Kabul municipal authorities have announced that some 1,800 internally displaced families have registered as such and have found shelter with friends and relatives. According to ICRC relief delegate Philippe Cattier, "Kabul's residents are already in dire straits because of the war without having to help others who are seeking refuge there, and so the municipal authorities themselves are doing their best to help these people". The ICRC delegation in Kabul, together with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), is actively trying to find ways of easing this additional burden on a war-torn city.

On the Kabul plateau, as elsewhere in the region, winter is fast approaching. While ARCS workers are busy registering people fleeing the fighting, ICRC delegates are setting up supply lines to provide them with food and other aid. The relief operation has, however, run into trouble, since 13 lorries carrying some 200 tons of wheat flour are stranded in a warehouse in Charasyab, a town 10 km south-east of Kabul that is currently under Taliban control. The continuing fighting has made it impossible for this convoy to get through.

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ICRC NEWS N° 43 / 25 October 1995
SOUTH LEBANON
END OF FIRST ICRC VISIT TO DETAINEEs IN KHIAM DETENTION CENTRE

On Tuesday 24 October, an ICRC team completed a visit to Khiam prison that started on 9 October. The delegates examined the conditions of detention there, while the ICRC doctor assessed the medical situation. During that period, four Arabic-speaking delegates conducted private interviews with 191 detainees, including 8 women.

It was the first time that the ICRC was granted access to the detention centre since it opened more than 10 years ago. In accordance with its customary procedure, the ICRC will transmit its findings and recommendations in a confidential report to the authorities concerned and will repeat its visits at regular intervals. The visit was carried out under the mandate conferred on the ICRC by the Geneva Conventions.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
TWO MISSING JOURNALISTS FOUND THANKS TO ICRC "HOT LINE"

Two Turkish journalists reported missing in Bosnia on 7 October were found thanks to the "Hot Line" set up by the ICRC to assist and protect journalists on dangerous missions or arrested during the course of their work.

The ICRC was informed on 13 October by their respective media, the Hurriyet newspaper and the Anatolian News Agency, that they were missing. A few days later, on 19 October, ICRC delegates found the two men in a place of detention in Sarajevo.

The very same day, the ICRC informed their families, newspaper and news agency that they had been discovered safe and sound. Both journalists were freed on 21 October and were handed over to the ICRC at Sarajevo airport, together with 18 other people, in a simultaneous release operation.

The ICRC "Hot Line" has been in existence since 1985 (tel. +4122 734 6001, or fax +4122 734 8280). It has meanwhile dealt with more than 175 cases of journalists who have found themselves in difficulty, including almost 40 in the former Yugoslavia alone.

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SARAJEVO CHILDREN ENJOY A BREAK AND A SANDWICH...

Last week the German Red Cross and the ICRC began the third phase of their school snacks programme which will provide a break time sandwich and a glass of milk to more than 42,000 primary school pupils aged between seven and fourteen living on both sides of the confrontation line dividing Sarajevo.
The programme was launched exactly a year ago, but had to be suspended in March 1995 when schools were closed because of the worsening security situation.

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Pierre Gauthier, ICRC Geneva, Tel. ++41 22 730 2839
SRI LANKA
ICRC CONCERNED ABOUT POPULATION OF JAFFNA

As military operations continue in northern Sri Lanka, prompting more than 100,000 civilians to flee their homes, the ICRC trusts that the warring parties will respect the non-combatant status of the inhabitants of the city of Jaffna. The ICRC has urged both sides to spare the civilian population and to observe the demilitarized zone around the city's hospital, currently under the protection of the Red Cross emblem, where thousands of people have taken refuge.

The ICRC is also concerned by increasing difficulties in getting food and, even more important, essential medicines for the region's health services to their destinations. The food is supplied by the Sri Lanka government and transported from Colombo to Jaffna by the ICRC in ships flying the Red Cross flag. The last ICRC medical consignment reached Jaffna in July, and the latest upsurge in fighting means that there is a growing need for surgical supplies. There is no immediate worry on the food front, but should distribution difficulties persist in the weeks to come the more vulnerable groups among the region's population will be badly affected by shortages.

With the onset of the monsoon in northern Sri Lanka, the ICRC is also concerned about the lack of adequate shelter for many of the displaced families.


INDIA
ICRC STARTS VISITS TO DETAINEES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

On 30 October, ICRC delegates started visiting detention centres in Jammu and Kashmir under an agreement signed with the Indian government on 22 June last. The ICRC expects to visit all persons arrested in connection with the situation in the region. The visits will be conducted in accordance with the institution's standard procedures, the purpose being to assess general conditions of detention. Where necessary, the ICRC will help restore links between detainees and their families.

Further information: Savita Vardé-Naqvi, ICRC New Delhi, tel. ++ 9111 462 2338

RWANDA
SAVING THE LIVES OF DETAINEES

On his return from a four-day visit to Rwanda (25 to 28 October), ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga once again expressed acute humanitarian concern about the situation in a country which is only slowly recovering from the 1994 genocide.
Mr Sommaruga said at a press conference in Geneva that the ICRC's operation in Rwanda, which provides drinking water, food and medicines for some 58,000 people detained in appallingly overcrowded conditions, was one of the largest in its history. Because of the exceptional nature of the crisis, the ICRC is also working with the Rwandan authorities and various UN agencies to install facilities in new detention centres. The sole purpose of this ICRC project is to save the lives of detainees; it does not imply a long-term commitment to tasks that are the responsibility of the Rwandan government alone. Mr Sommaruga also firmly stated that humanitarian organizations must not bear the burden of helping Rwanda on their own; it must be shared by the international community as a whole.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 2265  
Nina Winquist, ICRC Kigali, tel. ++ 250 72 781

BURUNDI
WATER FOR SURVIVAL

In a country constantly hovering on the brink of further human tragedy, the ICRC is responding to one of the population's most urgent needs. In October ICRC teams provided some 40,000 people on the Imho plain north of the capital Bujumbura with 800,000 litres of drinking water. The water supply system in this region, formerly the country's "rice basket", has been completely destroyed during Burundi’s protracted and bloody interethnic crisis.

The ICRC hopes soon to expand its water distribution project to cover about 100,000 people in the area, but its operations are seriously hampered by continuing security problems: on 28 October one of its tanker trucks was damaged by an anti-personnel landmine. Since then, it has been trying to obtain assurances from the various parties involved that humanitarian workers and equipment will not be attacked or otherwise hindered in their activities.

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René-Luc Thévoz, CICR Genève, tél. ++ 41 22 730 22 65
SRI LANKA
EMERGENCY RELIEF SHIP READY FOR NORTHERN SRI LANKA

In view of the exceedingly volatile situation, worsened by the recent arrival of the monsoon rains, the ICRC has assembled a consignment of 1,500 MT of flour, 3 MT of medical supplies (drugs) and 8 MT of emergency supplies such as rolls of plastic sheeting to provide emergency shelter for some of the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the recent fighting in the Jaffna peninsula. The ICRC-chartered *M.V Habarana* is scheduled to sail from Trincomalee for Point Pedro as soon as clearance is given by the Sri Lankan authorities. On 7 November, the Sri Lankan government asked the ICRC to coordinate all relief operations in this particular region.

Northern Sri Lanka is currently in the grip of confusion and fear. Large numbers of people have left their homes and have settled in makeshift camps or are still on the move. The onset of the monsoon rains means that not only is there need for shelter and to forestall the outbreak of epidemics (dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria...) but heavy seas frequently disrupt shipping plans. The only humanitarian supply line open to the Northern part of the island is via the various ICRC protected boats conveying government provided food and medicine as well as other emergency relief supplies. A second ICRC-protected ship, carrying 3,500 MT of relief supplies is scheduled to leave Colombo shortly.

Further information: Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Geneva, Tel. ++ 4122 730 2302

TAJIKISTAN
TENSIONS ON THE RISE

The Garm and Tavildara valleys are once again the scene of clashes between Tajik government and opposition forces. Over the past few weeks incidents have become increasingly frequent, leaving dozens of dead and wounded on both sides. Several hundred inhabitants in the Mionadu area are reported to have fled to the mountains because of the fighting.

The ICRC is monitoring the needs of medical facilities in the areas concerned. Last week delegates delivered emergency aid to a field hospital in Argankul, close to the scene of the fighting, which had received more than 60 casualties in three days.

Despite precarious security conditions, at the end October ICRC delegates completed the distribution of over 33 tonnes of wheat seed to 1,660 families in the Tavildara region. The programme is intended to help the population regain a measure of self-sufficiency. Life in these remote mountainous regions is difficult even in peacetime, and the situation has steadily worsened since 1994 owing to sporadic outbreaks of fighting.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, Tel. ++ 4122 730 2307
IMPORTANT PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT:

The 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent will be held in Geneva from 3 to 7 December 1995. This major humanitarian forum - the first International Conference in nine years - will bring together representatives of 186 States party to the Geneva Conventions and all components of the Movement: 168 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). To explain the aims of the International Conference and alert the international community to the urgent need for a greater commitment to humanitarian issues, the leaders of the Movement will hold a press conference on:

Thursday,
9 November 1995 at 11 am
at the auditorium of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum,
17 avenue de la Paix, Geneva

The Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein, the President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, and the President of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mario Villarroel Lander, will address the media.

For further information call: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++ 41 22 730 2317
Jon Valfells, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Geneva,
tel.: ++ 41 22 730 4374
or via Internet: http://www.icrc.ch and http://www.ifrc.org
AFGHANISTAN
KABUL: ROCKETS SLAM INTO CIVILIAN AREAS

ICRC drivers and field officers actively assisted in the evacuation of people wounded by rockets and artillery shells that hit the Afghan capital on Saturday 11 November and again two days later. They then transported the wounded to various hospitals in Kabul. Just around office closing time on Saturday, at least three rockets slammed into a densely populated area in the Taimani district. According to eyewitnesses, nine actors and movie technicians were killed when one of the rockets crashed through the roof and exploded inside the city's only remaining private film studio. Two other rockets landed in the immediate vicinity, killing at least another 25 civilians and wounding many more.

At least 57 residents were killed and more than 150 wounded in the recent attacks on civilian areas of the Afghan capital. According to official and hospital sources, this was the bloodiest incident since fighting resumed mid-October. The recent rocket attacks are all the more alarming since, according to the ICRC head of delegation in Kabul, Peter Stocker, the town is preparing itself for "its worst winter ever". For the first time road access has been completely blocked and no fuel, wood or other relief is currently allowed in.

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SRI LANKA
SHOULD THERE BE A BATTLE FOR JAFFNA TOWN...

As the fighting on the outskirts of Jaffna town grew more intense, and at the request of the hospital's medical authorities, on Tuesday 14 November the ICRC organized a convoy of about 30 vehicles to transport to Point Pedro some 50 civilian patients as well as the remaining medical and nursing staff and their families (220 people in all). The patients and the medical staff have joined health facilities in the east of the Jaffna peninsula, which is currently outside the main combat zone. The ICRC is now working from Point Pedro, using the port as the logistics base for its relief operation for people displaced by the conflict.

Since some inhabitants did not wish to leave Jaffna town and are still living there, the ICRC urgently appeals to the forces involved to take all necessary precautions so that if the fighting spreads to the city itself the few remaining civilians and medical and health facilities may be spared.

CHINA

TRAINING COURSE FOR THE CHINESE NAVY

The ICRC conducted a training course for the Chinese Navy at the Canton Naval Academy from 6 to 11 November. The course, attended by some 40 naval officers and representatives of the Chinese Red Cross, was devoted to issues pertaining to international humanitarian law and forms part of a programme designed to raise awareness of humanitarian law among the Chinese armed forces. The programme was initiated in 1991 at the Political Academy in Xi’an and continued in 1993 with a course for the Chinese Army in Nanking.

Further information: J.-F. Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. +4122 730 2273

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

KUPLJENSKO: SUFFERING AT DEGREE ZERO

The 20,000 to 25,000 people expelled from Velika Kladusa in August and still stranded in a camp in Kupljensko (Croatia) are now facing extremely severe climatic conditions. Tension is mounting in the camp, but the authorities are not doing anything to calm the situation. The lack of proper shelter as temperatures drop to zero at night increases the risk of medical problems. The ICRC is alarmed by the fact that life-threatening cases are not allowed to be transferred to the hospital in Karlovac and that the few that did reach the hospital were refused treatment. The situation has worsened these last few days since NGOs were prevented from bringing firewood and fuel into the camp. The ICRC managed to distribute 2,000 blankets and 200 tents for the most needy, and Red Cross water tankers can still reach Kupljensko. A UNHCR evacuation programme has so far enabled 300 people - mainly women, children and elderly people - to move to Velika Kladusa.

ICRC delegates are on the spot monitoring the situation round the clock, but as winter approaches they fear the worst for the displaced population, for whom no political solution has been found. The ICRC is all the more concerned since Kupljensko is only one of the places in the former Yugoslavia where the coming winter may have disastrous consequences.

Further information: Amanda Williamson and Patrick Fuller, ICRC Zagreb, tel. +38541 6112 444
ABKHAZIA
A FIRST FOR ICRC TRACING AGENCY

After more than two years of separation owing to the conflict, a nine-year-old girl living in Georgia was reunited with her mother in Sukhumi (Abkhazia) on 8 November. This was a twofold achievement for the ICRC, not only because a child was involved but also because this was the first time that a family reunification was organized from Georgia to Abkhazia. The ICRC Tracing Agency evacuates about ten people out of Abkhazia each month, but these are essentially elderly or sick persons left without any means of support since the fighting in 1993.

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

PRESS CONFERENCE: LANDMINES MUST BE STOPPED

The Vienna Conference was a serious disappointment for all those who want landmines banned or their use restricted: the Conference agreed only to reconvene in 1996. The ICRC fears that the next session will be equally inconclusive if humanitarian concerns are not placed at the centre of the negotiations; in an attempt to mobilize public opinion, the ICRC is therefore launching its first worldwide media campaign on this issue.

On Wednesday 22 November at 10.30 a.m. at the ICRC's Geneva headquarters
President Cornelio Sommaruga will explain the goals of the campaign, while its advertising features will be presented by Ms Farah Ramzan from Abbott Mead Vickers, the UK-based agency that produced the creative concepts for the campaign.

Further information: Johanne Dorais-Slakmon, ICRC Geneva, tel. + + 4122 730 2319
AFGHANISTAN
INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS

At least eight civilians were killed and sixteen others wounded on Monday when two bombs were dropped on central Kabul. The attack caused shock and anger among the local population, which had been spared by recent rocket attacks that mainly affected southern and western districts of the city.

Of particular concern to the ICRC is the fact that the bombing appears to have had no direct military objective. According to local observers, the latest incidents seem to have been in retaliation for heavy losses suffered in the recent fighting. The ICRC reminds the parties to the conflict that targeting civilians for any reason is a violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Elsewhere in Kabul, the number of wounded people taken to hospital on both sides of the front line was unusually high during the past week. In all, 328 war-wounded were reported over that period.


RWANDA
FEEDING ONE MILLION RWANDANS

The ICRC has distributed food to over one million people in Rwanda since early 1995. A relief delegate, Pierrette Parriaux, said that to avoid food shortages, the ICRC had worked in recent months to help resettle returnees from camps for the internally displaced in Gikongoro and refugees returning from Uganda, Burundi, Zaire and Tanzania. "Our efforts have focused on those areas with a high concentration of returnees, such as Butare and Kigali Rural, and we are naturally providing food for both the returnees and the resident population".

The monthly ration handed out to each individual is 12 kg of cereals, 4 kg of beans, 2 litres of vegetable oil and 150 g of salt, enough to provide 2,400 kcal per person per day. The ICRC has so far this year distributed 37,000 tonnes of food.

To afford a measure of food security, the ICRC this year has also distributed seed and agricultural implements to some 135,000 Rwandan families. An assessment of the seed programme is currently underway.

If the situation remains stable, and to avoid creating dependency on food aid, the ICRC will phase out its overall food aid programme in Rwanda by the end of this year.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2265
Nina Winquist, ICRC Kigali, tel. +41 250 72 781
In early November the ICRC distributed notebooks, pencils, erasers, rulers, chalk and blackboards in a dozen schools in Grozny, Chechnya, which had suffered extensive damage. The distribution, organized with the help of school principals, covered one thousand first-grade pupils and is part of a programme launched last spring to furnish educational material to all schools affected by conflicts in various regions of the former USSR (Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan). This coming winter similar distributions of locally purchased equipment will be made in all primary schools in Chechnya, or some 150,000 pupils.

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

Earlier this month the ICRC regional delegate for Latin America travelled to Santiago de Chile to sign, with the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a cooperation agreement between the Government of the Republic of Chile and the ICRC.

Under the agreement, the Government of Chile pledges to make annual contributions to the ICRC’s operational budget, in addition to its regular contribution to the institution’s headquarters budget.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2454
The International Committee of the Red Cross notes with satisfaction that several States have recently acceded to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. These States are Micronesia (19.9.95), Swaziland (2.11.95) and South Africa (21.11.95). On the eve of the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, these accessions bring the number of States party to Protocol I to 142 and that of States party to Protocol II to 133, while 186 States have so far ratified the Geneva Conventions.

Over two thirds of the members of the international community are thus party to the Additional Protocols, a figure which lends these instruments a considerable degree of universality. This is encouraging for the victims of conflicts and for those who seek to help them, since the Additional Protocols have introduced numerous innovations, particularly with regard to the protection of the civilian population against the effects of hostilities.

The ICRC, which took part in the preparation of these instruments, is glad to see that they are being more and more widely accepted and ratified and hopes that the recent accessions will encourage States which have not yet done so to become party to the Protocols.

Further information: Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Geneva, Tel. +4122 730 2302

26th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT
MUSIC GROUP OF DISABLED CHILDREN
TO PERFORM AT OPENING CEREMONY

The 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent starts on Sunday 3 December 1995 with an opening ceremony during which Mr Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation, Botho Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, Chairman of the Movement's Standing Commission, Dr Mario Villarroel Lander, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, will address around 800 delegates. A multivision slide show, a reading of the Movement's seven Fundamental Principles by pupils of a Geneva school and testimonies by both delegates and victims read out by famous actors will provide a meaningful introduction to the topics of the Conference. The highlight of the opening ceremony will be a performance by "Dissimilis", a music group of disabled young people from Norway, of works by Grieg and Jobin. Finally the President of the Republic of Geneva's State Council, Mr Olivier Vodoz, will welcome the delegates to Geneva.

The opening ceremony at the International Conference Centre of Geneva (CICG) starts at 5 p.m. local time. The Conference debates will begin on Monday 4 December with a first plenary session and continue with discussions in two different commissions until
Thursday 7 December, when the Conference will adopt various resolutions. A total of 169 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as 186 States party to the Geneva Conventions, have been invited to this 26th International Conference.

Further information: Jon Valfells, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Tel. +41 22 730 4374, or Tony Burgener, ICRC, Tel. +41 22 730 2317

Accreditation: at the Conference Centre as from 12 noon local time on Sunday 3 December 1995. The accreditation procedure can be accelerated by faxing requests to the ICRC Press Service: +41 22 734 8280

LATVIA, LITHUANIA, ESTONIA
RELATIONS BETWEEN BALTIC STATES

A meeting of Baltic States on international humanitarian law, held under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), took place in Riga, Latvia, on 22 and 23 November 1995. It was their first-ever such meeting and enabled delegations from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to exchange views on laws to be adopted to promote respect for international humanitarian law. It also helped to foster closer contact between the ICRC and OSCE.

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

HOT FROM THE ICRC NEWS-STAND...

The latest ICRC brochure Challenges of the Nineties, a special report on ICRC activities 1990-1995 provides both the background for and analysis of the considerable growth of the ICRC's work during five exceptionally turbulent years in numerous countries around the world, helping hundreds of thousands of people. In the first article entitled "The shape of things to come", ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga writes that the "1990s have marked the 'coming out' of the organization in many senses" since it was during this period that the ICRC obtained observer status at the UN and also emphasized its willingness to cooperate with all other agencies involved in helping victims of conflict.

The bottom line of this analysis is that the "ICRC remains braced for the future, though not without anxiety" since, among other reasons, the "battle for resources will continue to be compounded by deep-flowing political and ethnic tensions...".

For more information or for copies of the brochure, call:
Michel Clapasson, ICRC Geneva, +41 22 730 2422
Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, +41 22 730 2317
THE ICRC WORLDWIDE  
JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 1995

1. **PRESENCE**

The ICRC maintains a permanent presence in 51 countries, distributed as follows:

- Africa : 15
- Latin America : 8
- Europe : 10
- Asia : 9
- Middle East : 9

The ICRC also has a delegation in New York and in Washington.

2. **PERSONNEL**

The average number of ICRC staff is as follows:

- headquarters : 676
- expatriate staff : 839
- National Society personnel : 216
- local employees : 6,428

**TOTAL** 8,159

3. **FINANCE**

The institution's initial budget for 1995 totalled 620 million Swiss francs (US$ 512 million). Additional expenditure subsequently had to be included for operations in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Somalia. Monies received to date however (92% from governments, 5% from National Societies, 3% as private donations) will not cover this year's expenses.

4. **VISITS TO DETAINEES**

ICRC delegates visited 149,098 detainees in 1,932 places of detention in 52 countries.

5. **CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY**

The Central Tracing Agency (CTA) succeeded in establishing the whereabouts of 7,251 people for whom tracing requests had been filed.
The CTA arranged for the exchange of 2,532,794 messages between members of families split up by conflict, disturbances or tension. It also enabled 4,602 people to rejoin their families.

6. **ASSISTANCE**

The ICRC distributed more than 85,000 tonnes of relief supplies (food, clothing, blankets, tents, etc.), including 20 million Swiss francs' worth (US$ 15 million) of medical assistance.

7. **SURGERY/ORTHOPAEDICS**

**Surgery**

The ICRC had surgical staff working in six hospitals in Africa and in Asia, which admitted 5,236 patients and performed 11,000 surgical operations. A further 6,200 people were given out patient care.

Two other hospitals (in Kabul) received technical and financial assistance from the ICRC. This enabled them to provide treatment for 5,815 patients, to perform 8,700 surgical operations and to give out patient care to around 28,000 people.

**Orthopaedic projects**

The ICRC was involved in 33 orthopaedic projects in 16 countries. More than 7,541 amputees were fitted with prostheses, while 1,432 people received other orthopaedic appliances and 445 people were provided with wheelchairs.

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REPUBLIC OF GUINEA
OIC SUPPORTS ELIMINATION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES

The 23rd Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held in Conakry, unanimously adopted on 12 December 1995 a resolution calling for the elimination of anti-personnel landmines and for mine clearance. The resolution urges the 52 OIC member States (encompassing 935 million people in Africa, Asia and Europe) to support efforts to adopt effective measures that would end the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines and eliminate them altogether. It also asks the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to ensure that firm measures are adopted when the Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention reconvenes in Geneva in 1996. The OIC decided in addition to put the subject of mines on the agenda of its future meetings. The resolution was sponsored both by the Republic of Guinea and by Algeria, and was endorsed by many other States.

Further information: Johanne Dorais-Slakmon, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2319

NORTHERN CAUCASUS - CHECHNYA
AN OMINOUS TURN FOR THE WORSE

In the absence of any real solution to the conflict in Chechnya, and as legislative and presidential elections approach, the situation there is taking an ominous turn for the worse, with sporadic clashes and attacks making the atmosphere extremely tense. In view of these events, the ICRC has temporarily reduced its staff in Grozny, but it is nevertheless pursuing humanitarian activities essential to the population, such as providing drinking water to districts where the supply has still not been restored. There are also other needs to be met since many of the displaced persons who returned to the capital are now living in partially destroyed buildings with no heating or electricity, and winter has already set in.

In southern Chechnya, fighting and the presence of mines have held up the harvesting, and food supplies are virtually exhausted. In response to this situation, the ICRC has set up a winter relief programme for the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, orphans, large families, and the disabled, and is distributing food parcels and blankets to some 100,000 people. Reinforced plastic sheeting, winter clothing, blankets and candles are also being handed out, wherever security conditions permit, to nearly 100,000 individuals whose homes have been severely damaged by the fighting.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 23 07
BURUNDI
GRENADE LANDS IN HOSPITAL ROOM

Following the clashes that broke out in Bujumbura on 6 December 1995, the ICRC spent three days evacuating over 50 wounded to hospitals in the city. During the night of 8 December, a grenade thrown into Rwagasore hospital landed in a room where 12 of the evacuated were located, killing two nursing aides and injuring 20 other people. In the ensuing pandemonium, most of the wounded fled the hospital and made their way to a camp for displaced persons on high ground near the city. There they received medical treatment from the ICRC, which also evacuated eight seriously wounded to two other hospitals. Appalled by the incident, the ICRC has called for respect for the wounded, medical personnel and hospital facilities, as stipulated by international humanitarian law.

Further information: Patrick Berner, ICRC Bujumbura, tel. +257 223 280
or Daniel Philippin, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 22 44

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
CHILDREN TRANSFERRED OUT OF GORAZDE

The ICRC has transferred three children in their early teens out of Gorazde to be reunited with their families. This was the first time in nine months that it has been able to carry out such an operation. From Sarajevo the children were taken to Zagreb, where ICRC tracing delegates will send them on to Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. Since 12 October, when a ceasefire was agreed on, the tracing office in Sarajevo has reunited over 20 families in the city or elsewhere. The winter relief programme is also proceeding smoothly in all parts of the city, where blankets, stoves and plastic sheeting are being distributed to people in orphanages and other institutions, and to vulnerable groups such as single-parent families and the elderly. This assistance is particularly welcome in the Bosnian Serb-held areas of Ilidza, Hadzici, Vogosca, Iljias and Grbavica. "Even if the peace agreement is signed soon, the winter will be very cold and many people will still be in need", said Beat Schweizer, head of delegation in Sarajevo.

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Pierre Gauthier, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2839

ZAIRE
ICRC RESUMES ACTIVITIES IN MASISI

Owing to a security incident in early November 1995, the ICRC was forced to suspend its activities in Masisi, a mountainous region north-west of the town of Goma, as ethnic clashes between Rwandan immigrants and indigenous Zairians wreaked death and destruction on the area’s villages (see ICRC News of 4 October 1995). Having obtained renewed assurance for its safety, however, the ICRC resumed its work in the region on 4 December. Consequently, over 6,000 people in and around the village of Kibabi last week received blankets, cooking pots and farming tools.

Further information: Vincent Nicod, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. +243 12 34 191
Alard Du Bois-Reymond, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2218
LIBERIA
ICRC REOPENS CLINIC IN GBARNGA

Taking advantage of the relative calm resulting from the peace process in Liberia, the ICRC has again been able to venture out of the ECOMOG-controlled area surrounding Monrovia and go to Gbarnga, a town the hostilities had cut off from the rest of the country, on a number of occasions. An initial survey of the situation in the town and its surroundings having indicated that the population lacked even the most rudimentary medical facilities, the ICRC reopened a clinic in Gbarnga on 5 December and, together with the Liberia National Red Cross Society, recruited a local medical team so that patients could receive basic health care. Other clinics are scheduled to open shortly in the area surrounding Gbarnga and in the town of Totota.

Further information: Roger Ruffy, ICRC Geneva, tel. + +4122 730 27 35
Marco Brudermann, ICRC Monrovia, tel. + +231 226 306
ANGOLA
RELEASE OF PRISONERS

On 12 and 14 December the ICRC supervised the release of 52 prisoners held by the Angolan authorities.

Under the terms of the Lusaka Protocol, signed in November 1994 by representatives of UNITA and of the Angolan government, all persons detained in connection with the conflict are to be released by the two parties, under ICRC supervision. ICRC delegates went to the towns of Uige and Menongue to make sure that each released prisoner would be taken to the area or place of his or her choice.

Since the signing of the Protocol, 20 people released by UNITA and 262 by the Angolan authorities have returned to civilian life.

Further information: Sue Featherstone, ICRC Luanda, tel. +2442 366 666
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MADRID HUMANITARIAN AID SUMMIT
ICRC PRESIDENT PROPOSES TO TAKE MESSAGE FURTHER

On his return from the Humanitarian Aid Summit held in Madrid on 14 December, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga welcomed the agreement reached by the major donor agencies of the United States and the European Union, UN agencies, the Red Cross and representatives of the NGO community. He proposed that endorsement of the Madrid Declaration be sought from other important donor countries such as Japan, Canada, Norway, Australia, Switzerland, the industrialized nations of South-East Asia and the Gulf States, and from all communities at war.

The Madrid summit was convened by Emma Bonino, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, in response to the mounting frustration of humanitarian organizations which felt that their work was being used as a substitute for political action. The summit called for free access to all persons in need and respect for the independence and impartiality of humanitarian agencies, and demanded an end to the flagrant disregard currently shown for international humanitarian law.

In his address to the summit, Mr Sommaruga urged governments to take preventive and remedial action in crisis situations using the political means at their disposal, to comply with the Geneva Conventions and to enforce compliance in accordance with their commitments as signatory States.

Further information: Pierre Gassmann, ICRC Geneva, tel. +4122 730 2889
Between 7 and 16 December an ICRC team comprising three delegates and a nurse visited 720 Moroccan prisoners out of the 1,900 still held by the Polisario Front. During the visits, conducted in the Tindouf area, 24 men were seen and registered for the first time since their capture.

The prisoners visited were given the opportunity to write Red Cross messages which will be delivered to their families.

The ICRC remains ready to supervise the repatriation, at the earliest possible date, of all persons detained in connection with the Western Sahara conflict, independently of the overall settlement of the matter.

Last November 185 Moroccan prisoners were repatriated under ICRC auspices. Seventy-two Sahrawis held by the Moroccan authorities were visited in Agadir in May and again in November in accordance with the ICRC’s standard procedures.

Further information: Rolin Wavre, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2876

It's that time of year again...
so we send our readers
the season's greetings and best wishes for 1996.
Please note:
ICRC News will be back on your fax machines and
at your workstations on 10 January 1996