AFGHANISTAN

FOOD REACHES BAMIYAN

This week a ninth ICRC truck reached the encircled region of Bamiyan, some 250 km north-west of Kabul, bringing food to some 2,000 particularly needy families in this mountainous area of Afghanistan. The assistance was necessary because of an extremely harsh winter and the effects of the long-drawn-out conflict. Over the past month nearly 120 tonnes of food have been sent to Bamiyan, supplementing the 400 tonnes of potatoes purchased locally for distribution.

Because of the turbulent events in the north, the situation in the entire northern and central portions of Afghanistan is highly volatile and the ICRC delegation has been exercising caution in dispatching relief supplies. It was feared that any large convoys might be attacked and looted by armed groups operating in the area, so the delegation arranged with Afghan traders to have the trucks travel one by one over the hazardous roads of the Hindu Kush mountains. With the arrival of the ninth vehicle, nearly all the relief supplies for needy families in Bamiyan have reached their destination safely. Others will follow, but don't tell anyone!

Further information: Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2906
Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 382 280 131

ETHIOPIA

AID FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

During much of November and December the few available helicopters were the only way of bringing assistance to the victims of devastating floods in south-eastern Ethiopia. With the waters now gradually receding, in the first week of January a convoy consisting of four Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and two ICRC trucks managed to reach the hitherto isolated settlements of Hargele and Cherati in the Afder area, bringing in much-needed aid in the form of 28 tonnes of food grain, 13 tonnes of seed, 1.3 tonnes of high-energy biscuits and one tonne of medical and other items.

The chairman of the ERCS regional branch, an ICRC health delegate and a number of experienced field staff distributed, through local communities, these emergency supplies as well as the tools needed to immediately plant maize, the crop best suited to current soil conditions.

An ICRC team using light vehicles had gone to the same area in the last week of December on a medical assistance and assessment mission which confirmed the desperate situation of small communities stranded on higher elevations or plots of land surrounded by floodwaters. It was decided that the supplies brought in by the convoy would be handed over to elders and local representatives in the region's main administrative centres - Godscubo, Hargele and Cherati - where emergency committees had been set up to seek ways of reaching isolated groups of people in outlying areas.
As the rains abated during December and the waters started to subside, it became even more urgent to distribute seed, in addition to sufficient quantities of food grain, so that the population could plant crops as soon as possible and gradually regain its self-sufficiency.

Further information: Peter Iseli, ICRC Addis Ababa, tel. ++2511 518 366

IRIAN JAYA
HELP ARRIVES BY SEA

A ship carrying 82 tonnes of emergency food supplied by the ICRC has managed to reach the coastal town of Timika in Irian Jaya. The aid is intended for several thousand people hard hit by continuing drought in a region already suffering from chronic armed violence. The food will be distributed by helicopter to high-risk population groups entirely dependent on ICRC aid for their survival, first in the Mimika district and then in the southern part of the Baliem valley and the Merauke region (along the border with Papua New Guinea).

Further information: Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2906

CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE
RED CROSS MESSAGES: A SUCCESS STORY

On 12 December last, the ICRC set up a service in Brazzaville to collect Red Cross messages from people who have not been able to contact their relatives abroad since the beginning of the conflict, on 5 June 1997.

Every day four Congolese Red Cross volunteers receive about 50 messages at the collection centre. Thus far almost 400 messages have been sent the world over - not only to other countries in Africa, but as far as Cuba, Russia and even China. The programme will continue until normal means of communication have been restored. More collection points will be opened shortly in other parts of Brazzaville so that a greater number of inhabitants can use the service.

In parallel, the ICRC is continuing its programme to reunite unaccompanied children with their families. At present 84 such children are in the ICRC's care in Brazzaville, a dozen in Pointe-Noire and a dozen more in Kinkole, near Kinshasa, where a reception centre was set up during the conflict for refugees from Brazzaville. So far more than 30 children have been reunited with their families.

Further information: Remo Tamburlin, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. ++243 12 34 191

During the weekend of
10 - 11 January 1998, for all
information please call the press
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(mobile) 41 79 202 36 70

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Head of Press: Philippe Lazzarini (Tel.: 730 21 90) - Editor: Kim Gordon-Batcs (Tel.: 730 23 02)
ICRC RESPONDS TO CHOLERA EMERGENCY IN MOGADISHU

Following the outbreak of cholera in the Somali capital Mogadishu last December, and with no other international organizations on the spot owing to the unstable security situation, the ICRC has launched an emergency operation in the city to assist victims of the disease.

In south Mogadishu, oral rehydration salts (ORS), intravenous fluids and plastic sheeting were provided to patients at the Medina and Bermuda rehydration centres. This was followed by distributions of 1,200 litres of intravenous fluids, over 7,000 sachets of ORS, plus antibiotics, to Mogadishu's Benadir hospital. Between 27 December and 11 January, the Benadir hospital cholera centre recorded 1,250 admissions and 63 deaths. To date, the hospital has been registering over 120 admissions every day.

Further north in Afgoi, the ICRC, working in close cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, opened a rehydration centre on 3 January. The ICRC rehabilitated the well supplying the centre's water, set up a hand pump, constructed latrines and a shower, and has been providing ORS, intravenous fluids and antibiotics. The centre will now be supported and monitored by the Federation.

Following a survey carried out by an ICRC health delegate, plans are being made to open another rehydration centre as soon as possible in Balad, in north-east Mogadishu, where 120 cases of severe diarrhoea and 36 deaths have been reported since 10 December.

The ICRC is closely monitoring the situation on the ground and is ready to intervene should new needs arise.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++ 2542 717 443

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
ICRC COLLECTS AWARD

The ICRC has received the Golden Rose of Peace Award for its humanitarian work in Bosnia and Herzegovina during 1997.

Last Saturday in Sarajevo around 10,000 people, including the President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the mayor of the city and various prominent people from diplomatic, political and social circles, attended the ceremony at which the ICRC collected the award, which is voted for by radio and television audiences.

In his acceptance speech, the head of the ICRC delegation in Sarajevo, Peter Stocker, stressed that the honour reflected the work of all the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement working in the country.
He also spoke about the ICRC's involvement in dealing with the lasting legacies of the conflict - namely, the deadly threat of landmines, and the vitally important task of alleviating the anguish of thousands of families waiting for news of relatives who were still unaccounted for.

Further information: Jon-Hans Coetzer, ICRC Sarajevo, tel. ++ 387 71 652407
Amanda Williamson, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 2678

SWITZERLAND

GENEVA TO HOST MEETING OF LEGAL EXPERTS

From 19 to 23 January, Geneva will host an intergovernmental meeting of experts to examine general problems that affect the implementation of international humanitarian law. The meeting will focus in particular on the increasing vulnerability of aid workers in a number of places where there is not only the risk of murder and armed banditry but also the growing threat of hostages being taken from among humanitarian organizations themselves.

Furthermore, the meeting, the first in an ongoing series, will discuss the applicability of the four Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols in the light of contemporary patterns of conflict, in which State authority - a cornerstone of international law - is often weakened if not completely absent.

The idea of periodic meetings on international humanitarian law, to be convened by the Swiss government, stems from the 1993 International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, also held in Geneva. The concept was endorsed by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 1995. Attending them will be legal experts and official representatives of all signatory States, plus a number of observer delegations.


The ICRC condemns and deplores two serious security incidents which took place within the space of three days. In Sri Lanka. Mr Gnapiragasam Thimoty Raveenthiran was killed during the night of 9 January while he was guarding the ICRC sub-delegation premises in Vavuniya. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr Sylvain Mutombo, a driver employed by the ICRC delegation in Kinshasa, was murdered on 12 January while carrying out his duties. Both men were married and had children.

Although the two incidents took place in different parts of the world, they were both the work of armed criminal elements, and demonstrate the growing insecurity of certain spheres in which humanitarian staff are operating. The matter is a source of ever-growing concern to the ICRC, which has responded by tightening the already stringent measures it had taken to ensure the safety of its staff in high-risk areas. Such incidents also demonstrate the need for all those involved in any way in humanitarian assistance operations to intensify and conclude the existing debate on security as quickly as possible.

Further information: Philippe Lazzarini, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 2190

During the weekend of 17-18 January 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Rubén Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
"We gathered everything we could: pieces of sheet metal, boards, uprooted bushes and cardboard floating on the water." Sitting in front of a makeshift hut, the mother of a large group of ragged children relates her struggle for survival during the recent flooding. The worst time was November, when the inhabitants of Marere were forced to seek refuge on dikes built along the Juba river, near where it flows into the Indian Ocean. Protected from the torrent, several thousand people built the new village in which they are still living. When the waters finally fell, they could find nothing of their former homes, even when these had been only a few hundred meters away. Everything — houses, crops and access routes — had been completely destroyed or carried off by the flood.

The villagers are surviving on fish and mangoes. But obtaining drinking water is a problem, as is sickness, in particular diseases transmitted by mosquitoes. The insects were swarming around the refuse littering the village perimeter — an ideal breeding ground — and malaria was spreading like wildfire until a team of Somali ICRC employees equipped with insecticide sprayers powered by portable generators covered the entire surface of the village with a mixture of water and aluminium sulphate. In the space of a few days, the mosquitoes virtually disappeared. But to ensure that they do not return, spraying must be carried out several times a day.

A month ago, the ICRC installed pumps connected to plastic pipes through which water is conveyed for purification and storage in large tanks set up at the centre of the village. The equipment was flown from Nairobi to the nearest airport and then transported to the dike by boat. The system produces 6,000 litres of drinking water a day.

Finally, the Somali Red Crescent Society has set up a clinic in the village to treat the sick.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, Tel.: ++2542 717 443
COLOMBIA

RETURNING HOME

Five hundred and twenty-six people forced to flee several months ago by fighting in the ongoing armed conflict in Colombia have been helped by ICRC delegates to return from Pavarando to their homes in Villa Hermosa (both towns in the Urabá region of northern Antioquia department). The return, which was encouraged by both the Colombian government and the Roman Catholic Church, began on 14 January.

It is still not possible to determine the true extent to which civilians have been displaced by the conflict in Colombia. The government and a number of national and international bodies studying the problem estimate the number of people displaced over the past decade at between 750,000 and 1.5 million.

The 526 individuals in Pavarando were split up into groups of about 70 people. Every day one group was taken by bus from Pavarando to Turbo, and then by boat to Riosucio. There the returnees spent the night in the local church, and the next day completed their journey to Villa Hermosa, once again by boat.

The ICRC's contribution to the operation consisted in providing the families with supplies sufficient to cover their needs for the first two weeks following their return.

In 1997 the ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross Society distributed emergency humanitarian aid to some 57,000 people displaced by the conflict.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva. Tel. ++41 22 730 2454

During the weekend of 24 - 25 January 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Joerg Stoecklin, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 80
The ICRC welcomes the announcement made by the British government, during an official visit by ICRC President Cornelia Sommaruga to London on 28 January, that it has ratified the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions. The United Kingdom is the 150th State to ratify Protocol I and the 142nd to ratify Protocol II. These two treaties, adopted in 1977, confirm and expand the protection owed by belligerents to the victims of international conflict (Protocol I) and of non-international conflict (Protocol II), with particular emphasis on the protection of civilians.

Protocol I stresses in particular the concept of "methods and means of warfare" which are deemed to be acceptable. Article 35 states that "the right of the Parties to the conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited", and adds that "it is prohibited to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering". The same article also stipulates that "it is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment".

The United Kingdom went a step further by making the declaration provided for in Article 90 of Protocol I recognizing the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission, whose function is to enquire into any facts alleged to be a grave breach or serious violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols.

The ratification by the United Kingdom of these crucial humanitarian treaties is particularly significant, since among NATO members only the USA and Turkey have not yet adhered to them, while France has ratified only Protocol II.

Furthermore, ICRC President Cornelia Sommaruga warmly welcomed the substantial increase in funding also announced on 28 January by the British government. Britain's "non-earmarked" contribution to the ICRC's operational budget will rise from 9 million pounds sterling in 1997 to £15 million in 1998, in addition to some £800,000 for the institution's headquarters budget.

This increased donation is particularly appreciated since the ICRC finished last year with a deficit. According to Jean-Marc Bornet, ICRC head of External Resources, "many donor countries have made exceptional efforts recently to give the ICRC financial support in these difficult times, and we are therefore especially pleased that the United Kingdom, which currently holds the European Union presidency, could increase its contribution in this way".

Further information: Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 23 02
AFGHANISTAN

HUNDREDS OF PRISONERS RELEASED AS RAMADAN ENDS

On 27 January, following an order from their leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban authorities released 112 prisoners held in Kabul and 75 others detained in Kandahar. The members of the anti-Taliban coalition, for their part, also expressed their intention to free a number of prisoners held in Mazar-i-Sharif and the Panjshir valley, where the ICRC has been conducting a fresh series of visits since 24 January to places of detention under the control of Commander Massoud. The latter released 85 Taliban prisoners on 29 January.

The releases coincide with *Aid-ul-Fitri*, the Muslim holiday celebrating the end of the Ramadan fast. Since last November the Afghan belligerents have undertaken large-scale prisoner exchanges, with which the ICRC has been associated. In addition to acting as a neutral intermediary between the parties to the conflict, it lends material and logistic support to such operations.

In 1997 over 7,800 prisoners in 81 detention centres were registered for the whole of Afghanistan. According to the figures available to the ICRC, there are now 4,000 detained by the Taliban, and a further 1,500 held by the anti-Taliban coalition. With the harsh Afghan winter causing further problems for a population already hit by widespread shortages, the ICRC is now systematically monitoring the nutritional status of people in captivity.

RETURN TO TAGAB

The vast majority of the 100,000 inhabitants of the Tagab valley, 90 km north-east of Kabul, are now returning to their land. In a country where flight from conflict is an all too regular occurrence, this welcome development signals the success of an ICRC pilot project combining emergency relief with resettlement work. The results are all the more remarkable as, even today, the region has a battle line running through it.

After being displaced from their homes by the fighting which ravaged Tagab in 1992, the valley’s inhabitants received assistance from the ICRC and the Swedish Red Cross in the Samarkhel camp near Jalalabad. For the last year, a project to revive the region’s agriculture has been under way to enable the displaced to return to their fields. The valley’s irrigation systems had to be reconstructed, new wells sunk and the old ones cleaned out. The latter had turned into rubbish pits, the result being epidemics and a continuing health hazard for children in particular. Now, 25 square kilometres of arable land have been restored to the local population, and 168 km of irrigation channels -- including the typical Afghan *karezis*, which run underground -- have been repaired.

With renewed pride clearly visible on the faces of the valley people, the ICRC was able to close its Tagab office officially on 19 January.

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Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 29 06
ABKHAZIA
COMMUNITY KITCHENS FOR THE NEEDY

The ICRC community kitchens programme is rapidly becoming the only source of sustenance for over 7,000 people in Abkhazia. There are now 24 canteens in the region, and the number of beneficiaries is still growing. The objective is simple: to provide people with a hot, balanced meal each day, consisting of soup, a main course, a pound of bread, plus tea and sugar. Once a month the beneficiaries receive a ration of fish. Soap is also distributed monthly, and this winter the ICRC has also handed out anoraks.

It is nearly four years since the end of the fighting between Georgia and Abkhazia, but the Abkhaz people are still feeling the effects of the blockade. Relief supplies are still sorely needed in all areas of daily life, with food and medical care especially lacking. The ICRC, which has been working in Abkhazia since 1992, has constantly adapted its aid programmes to reach the most deprived. Once again, it is the elderly, the disabled, members of minorities and those without any form of social welfare who are suffering the most in this volatile, insecure situation exacerbated by the presence of armed groups under nobody's control.

Since last September the community kitchen programme, launched in 1994, has been funded by the Finnish Red Cross, which has seconded a delegate to run the project. A large proportion of the vegetables used for the meals are produced locally under the ICRC's food and agriculture programme, which aims to restore a measure of self-sufficiency to the people.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 23 07

SOMALIA
ICRC COMBATS CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN MOGADISHU

Although the deyr, the shorter of Somalia's two rainy seasons, should have long been over by now, rain continues to fall in areas hit by torrential downpours since last October. The prevailing floods, which have paradoxically left so many places without drinking water and sanitation, have caused a rapid spread in the cholera epidemic. The ICRC, however, has responded quickly, and the initial results are starting to be seen.

At Mogadishu's Benadir hospital, for example, the number of cholera patients has dropped considerably, with daily admissions down from over 120 to around 50. Since the beginning of its emergency operation against the disease, the ICRC has provided 2,659 litres of intravenous fluids, 54,620 sachets of ORS (oral rehydration salts) and 12,000 antibiotic tablets in the rehydration centres it has set up.

On 17 January, following a survey carried out by an ICRC health delegate, another rehydration centre was opened in Balad, north-east of Mogadishu, where cases of severe diarrhoea and deaths had been reported since early December. The running of the centre, which so far has had 56 admissions and recorded two deaths, is now in the hands of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Federation has also taken over responsibility for the Afgoi centre north of Mogadishu.
Meanwhile, the ICRC continues to focus on cholera awareness and prevention. Two mobile teams, each with a qualified nurse and sanitation staff, are working in other villages further afield in the Balad and Afgoi areas. They are training their local counterparts in preventive methods, with mobilization of the population, early oral rehydration and hygiene awareness forming part of the programme. The ICRC teams also provide the local health workers with basic items such as chlorine and ORS so that they can start the rehydration process on the spot, thereby reducing the number of people who die before they can be treated at the centres.

Although the situation is now more under control, fresh outbreaks of cholera continue to occur. Latest reports indicate several cases of severe diarrhoea in Baidoa, which at present is inaccessible by land as the road was washed away by the floods. Once the road is passable again, an ICRC/Somali Red Crescent Society health team will assess the situation and take action if necessary.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

MINES STRATEGY MEETING IN CAMBODIA

Representatives of the ICRC, the Federation and 25 National Societies will meet in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 2 to 6 February 1998 to discuss the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's future strategy on anti-personnel landmines.

The meeting will focus on the National Societies' role in securing early ratification and universal acceptance of the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel mines, and on the part they can play in ensuring better care for mine victims and implementing prevention programmes.

Many National Societies have been at the forefront of the Movement's public campaign against landmines, which was officially launched by the ICRC in November 1995.

The ICRC has been providing artificial limbs and medical assistance for mine victims since 1979, and mine-awareness programmes are currently under way in a number of countries to help prevent further accidents.

Further information: Mary-Anne Andersen, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 23 29

During the weekend of 31 January - 1 February 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Kim Gordon-Bates, on (mobile) 41 79 357 50 03
KENYA

RED CROSS RELIEF AID IN RIFT VALLEY

For the past eight months, the Pokot and Marakwet districts in Kenya's Rift Valley have been rocked by violence between the two resident ethnic groups. Inter-tribal cattle-rustling has long been a source of tension in the area, but the conflict has escalated in recent months. Thousands of people from both sides have had to flee their homes and are now living in caves and other temporary shelters with little or nothing to eat, having been forced to abandon their fields for fear of attacks. The displaced population has also suffered greatly from diseases such as Rift Valley fever, malaria and pneumonia.

With support from the ICRC, the Kenya Red Cross Society sent a relief mission to the area in January. Over 15,000 people were identified as in urgent need of assistance.

Relief distributions, scheduled to begin on 18 January, were delayed for 10 days owing to the difficulty of reaching the affected area: the heavy rains that have been pounding the country for the past three months had washed away bridges and made roads virtually impassable. By the time the Red Cross convoy had reached the western town of Eldoret, it had become clear that the trucks, with their 10-tonne loads, were much too heavy to negotiate the region's rough, steep roads under such conditions. As a result, lighter trucks had to be sent and, as they had only half the capacity, the entire operation was slowed considerably.

So far, 68 tonnes of maize, 13 tonnes of beans and seven tonnes of oil have been distributed to some 1,300 displaced persons in Pokot and 1,900 in Marakwet. The operation is continuing, with deliveries planned to seven further towns.

Clashes have also erupted recently in the Rift Valley districts of Laikipia and Njoro, leaving thousands more displaced and in urgent need of aid. The Kenyan Red Cross has surveyed the areas involved and is discussing with the ICRC plans to provide assistance in the coming weeks.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel: ++2542 716 339

SOMALIA

SEED FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

The torrential rains that have been pummelling Somalia since last October have not only left people homeless, they have also severely affected agriculture, destroying the crop that had begun to grow and was due for harvesting in December/January. Many bakars, the traditional Somali underground storage containers for cereals, have been flooded, soaking the cereal and making it unsuitable for either sowing or eating. As a result, it is estimated that over 80,000 tonnes were lost.

After sending emergency relief to the flood victims, the ICRC launched the second phase of its operation in November with a programme aimed at ensuring medium-term food security for southern Somalia by providing farmers with replacement seed to be planted in time for harvest in March/April. The seed types furnished by the ICRC (mainly maize, sorghum, cowpeas and sesame) are all indigenous to Somalia.
The distribution is intended to cover all of southern Somalia (i.e. the regions of Gedo, Lower and Middle Juba, Bakool, Bay, Hiran, Lower and Middle Shabelle), providing over 600 tonnes of seed and more than 2,000 tonnes of food to upwards of 48,000 families (the ICRC basing its distributions on the family unit, calculated as equal to five individuals). Farmers need the seed for planting, but as they are also facing severe food shortages, steps have had to be taken to avoid immediate consumption of the seeds. Each family is therefore being given 45 kg of food along with 12 kg of seed and a vegetable-seed kit (a pack of various vegetable seeds with a farming instruction manual).

So far, seed distributions have been completed in all areas except Lower and Middle Juba. The programme will be expanded to an additional 12,000 families in Lower and Middle Juba, still too wet for planting to begin.

To cope with the enormous logistical problems involved in reaching the victims, unconventional means of transport such as convoys of camels, donkey carts and boats have been used.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel: ++2542 716 339

NORTHERN CAUCASUS / RUSSIAN FEDERATION

BREAD FOR GROZNY

Although hostilities in Chechnya ceased more than 18 months ago, a battle of a different kind continues for many people who are struggling to find enough food to eat. Last September the ICRC launched a new relief programme to take the place of its soup kitchens. Operated with the support of the Chechen committee of the Russian Red Cross, the project currently provides locally baked bread to almost 8,000 people a month, meeting the urgent need of disabled and elderly people – many of whom belong to the Russian minority – who have no other form of support. These marginalized groups generally receive no social security and are battling to cope with the harsh living conditions in the partly destroyed city. Some 20 bakeries are taking part in the programme, which was initially planned for the winter only but will probably be extended until the end of the year.

For security reasons, the ICRC has since December 1996 been working out of Nalchik, in Kabardino-Balkaria, to organize its relief work in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan. The programmes are carried out by locally hired ICRC staff and by the local committees of the Russian Red Cross, whose social assistance projects are financed by the ICRC. It also supports similar programmes run by the local committees of the Russian Red Cross in four further republics in the northern Caucasus and two other territories in the south of the Russian Federation.

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

During the weekend of 7-8 February 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
AFGHANISTAN
FIRST SUPPLIES REACH QUAKE VICTIMS

Relief teams sent by the ICRC to the area rocked by the earthquake in Afghanistan's Takhar province have been hard at work since Sunday 8 February. They face a mammoth task, made even more difficult by landslides, the distances between the stricken villages, the rough terrain at an altitude of over 2,000 metres and harsh winter conditions. Logistics will be of the utmost importance in the relief operation.

Delegates of the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who are on the scene report that the villages hit by the quake are a grim sight. The tremor razed thousands of homes and blocked roads with rivers of mud. Many inhabitants are in a state of shock, left without shelter in the freezing cold. On 9 February the local authorities reported that 3,281 people had been killed in 12 villages around Rostaq, the town closest to the epicentre. But estimates of the numbers of dead and wounded are still provisional. Access to other stricken villages farther afield is difficult. One medical survey team took three hours to cover just 15 km.

On 8 February the ICRC dispatched a first planeload of emergency medical supplies from the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif, with six specialists to assess needs and set up relief operations. The next day, another aircraft landed with 1,400 kg of medical material and sanitation equipment. Late Tuesday, a road convoy carrying 5,500 blankets and 100 plastic shelters arrived.

The hospital in Rostaq quickly became the focal point for medical assistance in the region. Three surgeons, two from Médecins sans frontières (MSF) and one from the ICRC, have treated hundreds of cases with the help of two local medical teams. Many patients have fractures, and some cases of paraplegia have been reported. One of the most urgent problems facing this hospital, and indeed all reception centres in the region, is water supply. The other major concern for the humanitarian organizations is how to provide shelter and adequate hygiene conditions for those who have fled the region and have not been taken in by the inhabitants of villages spared the effects of the earthquake. Water pipes, which were largely destroyed by the quake, are in urgent need of repair, as there is a high risk of epidemics. Moreover, the various parties to the Afghan conflict will have to grant the humanitarian organizations unrestricted access to the area if the relief operation is to be fully effective.

The ICRC has taken responsibility for the coordination of humanitarian aid in this context of armed conflict. The organization has extensive logistics and other infrastructure in the country, and has sent seven specialists to the Rostaq region from its base in Mazar-i-Sharif. MSF doctors and relief workers of the Afghan Red Crescent Society were the first to provide dressings, blankets and kitchen utensils to the survivors. A logistics officer and a relief expert from the Federation are also on the scene.

The various aid organizations, including United Nations specialized agencies, are in regular contact, both in the stricken region and in Kabul and Peshawar.

Further information: Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2906
ZAMBIA

ICRC VISITS SECURITY DETAINED

An ICRC team consisting of two delegates and a doctor was in Zambia from 19 January to 7 February, during which time they visited 94 security detainees and provided them with basic hygiene articles. They also met former President Kenneth Kaunda, currently assigned to residence. All these people were visited in accordance with the ICRC's customary working procedures.

Following the attempted coup d'état of 28 October 1997, the ICRC had submitted an offer of services to the Zambian authorities to visit persons detained in connection with the events; the offer was accepted in mid-January.

Further information: Jean-Pierre Givel, ICRC Harare, tel. ++2634 790 268

FRANCE

ICRC PRESIDENT HAS HIGH-LEVEL TALKS IN PARIS

During an official visit to France, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga was received on 6 February by French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Mr Sommaruga took this opportunity to urge that France reconsider its current position regarding ratification of Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions, an important instrument of international humanitarian law which in particular strengthens the protection afforded to civilians during international conflicts. The French Republic ratified Additional Protocol II, dealing with non-international conflicts, on 24 February 1984, but has yet to ratify the first of these two treaties. According to the ICRC President, France's ratification of Protocol I would be a major step towards the crucial goal of achieving universal recognition of humanitarian law.

During his stay in Paris, Mr Sommaruga also had talks with Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, Defence Minister Alain Richard and Secretary of State for Cooperation Charles Josselin. The French authorities reiterated their support for the ICRC's work, and President Sommaruga commended France's contribution to the process aimed at securing a total ban on anti-personnel mines.


New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 10.2.98
AFGHANISTAN

AIRDROPS: WEATHERING THE STORM!

Thousands of Afghan families are being cared for by humanitarian organizations working in Rostaq, a town near the epicentre of the earthquake that rocked north-eastern Afghanistan on 4 February. Food and relief supplies have so far been distributed in 16 of the 27 villages hardest hit by the tremor. The ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies now have some 25 specialists on the scene, including 16 expatriates.

In the past 48 hours bad weather and heavy snowfalls have further complicated aid deliveries, especially by air. On Monday 16 February the ICRC nevertheless managed to dispatch a fourth flight from Peshawar, Pakistan, to Khwajaghar, an airport 80 km west of Rostaq. The plane brought in six delegates, along with tents, blankets, mats and clothing. On the same day, an ICRC-chartered Hercules aircraft left Brussels for Peshawar, which will serve as the base for airdrops over Rostaq, weather permitting. The Hercules, with an airdrop capacity of 16 tonnes, will be made available to various United Nations agencies taking part in the relief operation, including the World Food Programme, which has large food stocks in the region. In addition, several road convoys have already reached Rostaq and others are on their way.

The medical emergency is now over. In ten days over 600 injured people were treated at the small hospital in Rostaq, and a vaccination programme is currently under way to reduce the risk of epidemics. The town's public buildings continue to provide shelter for the homeless, with some 5,800 people now housed in seven reception centres. It is estimated that 15,000 Afghans were displaced as a result of the quake. The local authorities' latest figures put the number of fatalities at 4,750.

Under the ICRC’s plan of action, 300 tonnes of flour, 144 tonnes of rice, 108 tonnes of beans, 57 tonnes of vegetable oil and 10 tonnes of high-protein biscuits are to be delivered to Rostaq over the next two months. Some 20,000 blankets, 2,000 tents, 2,000 sheets of plastic and 3,000 jerrycans are ready to be airdropped, together with 1,500 stoves and 45 tonnes of coal.

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Amanda Williamson, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 761 242 260
Caroline Hurford, Federation Rostaq, tel. ++873 682 283 430-1

SIERRA LEONE

BACK IN ACTION IN FREETOWN

After being confined to their compound during a week of heavy fighting in the Sierra Leone capital, ICRC delegates resumed their assistance activities for the population on 13 February.

Some 4,500 people who had taken refuge in the ICRC delegation began to return to their homes. The wounded, who had received first aid on the ICRC premises, were taken to hospital for treatment. The ICRC also provided the hospital with medicines and diesel fuel for its generator.
Some of the delegation's staff have been replaced during the last few days. A team of delegates, including a doctor, has arrived in Freetown to help carry out a survey of the inhabitants' needs.

The delegation is now assessing the damage to its warehouses in the wake of the fighting and looting, and is taking stock of the resources still available. At the same time, it is evaluating the need for medicines and food at various establishments such as hospitals and orphanages, which cannot cope without outside aid. Once the displaced people have returned to their homes, the ICRC will monitor the situation of the most vulnerable groups with a view to providing assistance as necessary.

In Bo, a town in the central part of the country where fighting broke out again on 17 February, a delegate who had remained on the spot worked with volunteers of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society to organize the transfer of the wounded to medical facilities and the evacuation of the dead for burial before the new upsurge of violence.

The ICRC has made initial contact with the relevant authorities in Freetown with a view to gaining access to people detained in connection with the fighting.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

CAMEROON
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR BURN VICTIMS

After a train carrying petroleum collided with another and later exploded in a densely populated district of Yaounde last Saturday, initial estimates put the number of dead at 120. At least 150 more people were critically injured with severe burns. The explosion occurred four hours after the collision, and in the meantime a large crowd had gathered to try to scoop up petrol spilling from the damaged tanks.

Volunteers of the Cameroon Red Cross Society arrived on the scene immediately and began taking the injured to hospital. The National Society also set up a bureau to coordinate work to identify the victims and inform their families. ICRC delegates provided the city's central hospital with medicines and medical supplies for the treatment of burns.

France has sent in medical material and staff to assist local doctors, and the ICRC will contribute 400 units of blood, enough for 200 patients.

Today, 18 February, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in cooperation with the Cameroon Red Cross, is to initiate a food aid project and a programme of psychological support for survivors of the disaster and families of the victims.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

IRIAN JAYA
AIRLIFT FOR FAMINE VICTIMS

In the dense forests of Irian Java there are no roads and no navigable rivers. The only way to reach the region's famine-stricken inhabitants is by helicopter. Apart from the logistic difficulties, the ongoing relief operation is hampered by frequent clashes between the OPM (Organisasi Papua Merdeka, or Free Papua Movement) and the Indonesian security forces.
Irian Jaya is suffering the effects of an unprecedented drought which could threaten the livelihood of up to 150,000 people in areas south of the mountains. Even if the long-awaited rains do come, the next crop of sweet potatoes will not be ready for harvesting before June. What is more, the population has not been able to preserve the cuttings needed to cultivate this staple food, and the conflict raging in Mimika district makes hunting and fishing virtually impossible.

Between October and December 1997 the mortality rate rose to alarming levels, especially among children and the elderly, and several hundred people died. In some villages up to 80 per cent of the population were malnourished. For the past three months the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI) and the ICRC have jointly been conducting a major humanitarian operation. Teams fly out of the Timika base every day, bringing food and medical supplies to the villages affected by the drought and famine. Many of the people in the region, weakened by hunger and the constant moves forced upon them by the poor security conditions, are also suffering from malaria, dysentery and respiratory ailments.

The helicopter used for the emergency operation has to make several round trips daily. Agronomists and nutritionists also travel to the area to set up a programme designed to restore the population's self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible. So far, the PMI and the ICRC have distributed 67 tonnes of food, seed and medicines to nearly 15,000 people in 19 villages in the security zone.

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TAJIKISTAN

SEMINAR ON LAW OF WAR FOR OPPOSITION COMMANDERS

On 10 February 1998 the ICRC held a seminar in the Tajik capital Dushanbe for 20 commanders of the 25th Battalion, a unit depending on the Ministry of Defence. The battalion, which is made up of troops of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), was recently incorporated in the government forces in application of the May 1997 peace agreement. The main objective of the seminar was to raise the UTO command structure's awareness of its responsibilities during combat operations, in accordance with the principles of the law of armed conflict and with Tajikistan's obligations under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

The event took place in the framework of a series of cooperation agreements between the Tajik authorities and the ICRC, aimed at including the principles of the law of war in the training of all military personnel, including troops belonging to the Ministries of the Interior and of Security. The Russian border troops based in Tajikistan recently expressed a wish to conclude a similar cooperation agreement with the ICRC.

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

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/02 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 17.2.98
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in Sierra Leone, dated 12.2.98

During the weekend of
21 - 22 February 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty. Ruben Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
AFGHANISTAN

BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

Three weeks after a violent earthquake struck the northern part of Afghanistan's Takhar province, distributions of food and other assistance continue. A second airdrop of 2,500 blankets was carried out over the town of Rostaq on 21 February, using an ICRC-chartered Hercules freight plane. The Pakistan air force also organized airdrops of relief supplies.

On 24 February a caravan of 200 donkeys loaded with blankets, tents and kitchen utensils managed to reach the villages of Ganj and Sar-i-Ghar, situated in mountainous terrain a four-hour march from Rostaq. The items were immediately distributed to the 700 families living there. Despite the bad weather in the region, supplies were also delivered by helicopter to a further six of the worst affected villages.

On the medical side, 9,000 people have been vaccinated against measles. In cooperation with the local authorities, the ICRC, supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is coordinating the humanitarian aid operation and assigns the various activities to the organizations present in the field, according to their respective spheres of competence and resources. Médecins sans Frontières covers health needs, while the World Food Programme has been placed in charge of food assistance and the ICRC is responsible for relief supplies.

"WHEN THE GROUND SWALLOWED US UP..."

Mohamed Sharif remembers that it was evening when he felt the rumblings beneath him. It all began gently at first and then suddenly the earth started shaking violently. Instinctively, he grabbed his family and dashed outside. Everyone was running frantically through the streets of this small village east of Rostaq. "It was like the ground was swallowing up the village; everything began sinking in the mud and we could see the cattle drowning. The quake had put out all the fires so it was completely dark. It was hard to keep the panic-stricken people together; everyone was rushing around not knowing what to do."

In a few seconds Mohamed lost everything he owned. The shop where he had managed to eke out a meagre existence was gone and his home was destroyed. Most of the livestock which were the means of subsistence for many of the villagers are now rotting under rubble.
Leaving his wife and children behind in the makeshift shelter he managed to put up using wood and sticks, Mohamed set off on a seven-hour walk to Rostaq, wearing only a pair of plastic sandals as he trudged knee-deep through the quagmire. When he arrived he tried to sell a bag of nuts he had gathered in the nearby forest, and then made his way to the ICRC office to write a Red Cross message to his brother, who works for the ICRC in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Mohamed Sharif's endurance is a testament to the resilience of the people of this region, which has enabled them to survive for centuries in a way which to Westerners seems reminiscent of a bygone age. Already villagers have begun to rebuild their shattered homes with whatever materials they can lay their hands on, and, in the community tradition, they are helping each other by sharing what little they have left.

For the time being Mohamed's biggest problem is shelter. He has a wife and five children, plus 10 other relatives, living under his makeshift wooden shelter, and the unusually harsh winter means that they have to fight an endless battle against the cold. "Now we have blankets", he said, "but I give them all to my children; I am so frightened that they will perish in this weather".

In the Red Cross message he sent to his brother Munir, Mohamed reassured him, explaining that "the whole village is destroyed, but the family are alive. We have decided to stay, but we don't know what will happen next. We're frightened because we have no shelter".

In the Rostaq area the cruel winter is still holding up the relief effort as the Red Cross and other agencies battle against the elements. Recent snow flurries and fog have prevented the planned airdrops from taking place as frequently as had been hoped, and the increasingly muddy roads make truck convoys hazardous at times. "The weather is not kind to us", said Red Cross coordinator Svante Yngrot, "and the conditions in which we work are probably the most challenging we have ever had to face in setting up a relief operation. Every day we try to find ways of reaching these people who are so sorely in need of help".

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SIERRA LEONE

ICRC VISITS DETAINEES HELD BY ECOMOG

ICRC delegates have begun visiting persons arrested during and after the fighting in which ECOMOG troops gained control over Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.

The ICRC team, including a doctor and a nurse, went to Freetown's Central Prison, where several hundred people arrested in the course of February are being held. The detainees include both combatants, notably regular members of the Sierra Leone armed forces and the Revolutionary United Front, and civilians. During such visits delegates register the detainees, give them a medical examination and inspect their conditions of detention.

The authorization to visit all persons held on Sierra Leonean territory controlled by ECOMOG came on 19 February and was signed by Colonel Maxwell Khobe, the commander of the ECOMOG task force in the country.

Further information: Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. +232 22 241 438
KENYA

RELIEF DISTRIBUTIONS CONTINUE IN RIFT VALLEY

Following the outbreak of violence in various districts of the Rift Valley, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), working with the support of the ICRC, began on 8 February to assist thousands of internally displaced persons.

The distribution of non-food aid is hampered by disastrous road conditions. In Laikipia district, the trucks eventually managed to get through to places such as Ol Moran, where 1,699 displaced people had found shelter in a church and were among the first to receive blankets, clothing, kitchen sets, jerricans, soap and plastic sheeting.

In Nakuru district, where further distributions are scheduled, 12 camps for displaced persons have been located. So far, supplies have been delivered to only four of the camps, mainly because of bad road conditions in the area. A total of 3,400 people have received aid from the joint KRCS/ICRC teams to date.

In all, 30 volunteers from the Nakuru and Nyahururu branches of the KRCS have taken part in distributions covering over 5,400 internally displaced people. The National Society and the ICRC have also conducted a survey in Nyanza province, where people have been injured and forced to leave their homes as a result of the violence in recent months.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update No 98/01 on ICRC activities to assist the flood victims in Somalia and Ethiopia, dated 18.02.98
- Update 98/03 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 23.2.98

During the weekend of
28 February - 1 March 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Doris Pfister, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 70
KOSOVO
ICRC AT THE READY

Following the recent outbreak of violence in Kosovo, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the ICRC provided various health facilities in the region with medical assistance in the form of dressing sets. The sub-delegation in Pristina is keeping in close contact with the Yugoslav authorities and the opposition, and stands ready to assist should new needs arise.

In addition, ICRC delegates are continuing to visit persons sentenced for endangering State security (some 100 since 1989).

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Thomas Merkelbach, ICRC Belgrade, tel. ++ 38111 761 063

SIERRA LEONE
ASSISTANCE IN FREETOWN

Shortly after the clashes in Freetown had ended on 14 February, relief workers from the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society reported that in the fighting and looting some 500 houses had been destroyed, leaving around 6,000 people homeless. Last week, ICRC delegates and National Society volunteers started providing them with food, kitchen utensils, plastic sheeting, blankets and hygiene items.

The ICRC also resumed food distributions to various public institutions in the city, including hospitals, orphanages, children's feeding centres and old-age homes. At present, a total of 7,500 people in 65 different facilities are receiving such aid.

In addition, the ICRC is preparing to provide food for some 20,000 Sierra Leoneans displaced from the interior of the country and around 5,000 destitute Liberian refugees, all of them within the Freetown peninsula.

ICRC medical teams resumed their support for around a dozen clinics throughout the capital offering free health care and medicines to the inhabitants; medical supplies were also distributed to the city's maternity hospital, Wilberforce military hospital (which also treats civilians), and the clinic at Freetown's Central Prison.
Delegates are currently visiting more than 1,000 persons detained in connection with the recent clashes and held at Central Prison, registering new detainees and distributing material assistance, mainly hygiene articles.

Further information: Lise Boudreault, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++ 232 22 241 438

EARTHQUAKE IN AFGHANISTAN
FROM EMERGENCY TO REHABILITATION

Red Cross teams based in Rostaq have finished distributing emergency relief to the villages worst affected by the recent earthquake in Afghanistan’s Takhar province.

Using a combination of airdrops and transport by helicopter, trucks and donkey caravans, the Red Cross has delivered over 250 metric tonnes of tents, blankets and other essential supplies to survivors in the 14 villages initially assessed as having suffered the worst damage.

"Poor weather conditions and difficult terrain have made this one of the most complex logistical operations we have faced in years", said Eric Grand D’Hauteville, head of the ICRC office in Rostaq. "When the weather was good, we were able to deploy all the modern technology available; at other times, the only viable alternative was to use donkeys to carry the supplies."

The Red Cross, which has been working closely with the other agencies on the spot - notably the UN, in charge of food assistance, and Médecins sans Frontières, which covers medical needs - now intends to scale down its operation. The focus will shift to strengthening the Afghan Red Crescent Society in the region and providing inhabitants with items such as farming tools to help them regain some degree of self-sufficiency.

Further information: Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 761 242 260

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org :
- Update 98/04 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 3.03.98
- Update 98/02 on ICRC activities in Sierra Leone, dated 26.02.98

During the weekend of 7 - 8 March 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Kim Gordon-Bates, on (mobile) 41 79 357 50 03

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KOSOVO (FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA)

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

In the last few days, ICRC delegates have been attempting to assess the humanitarian needs of the civilian population in the region affected by last week's violence. This task has been made all the more urgent by the bitterly cold weather which is adding to the hardships faced by the people living in the triangle formed by the towns of Srbica-Skanderaj, Glogovac and Klina. Given the deserted appearance of the places visited by the delegates, it seems that some people, probably including a number of wounded, have taken refuge in the surrounding woods and hills. The ICRC would like to bring them warm clothing, food and blankets as quickly as possible.

At present the ICRC's evaluation of needs in the region is only partial: its delegates have not been authorized to visit all the places affected, in particular Prekaz, Laushe and Klina. On 9 March, however, the ICRC was able to deliver dressings, medicines, food and baby items to Srbica-Skanderaj. In addition, anonymous threats were made on 10 March to delegates from the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. This situation naturally makes it more difficult for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to do its humanitarian work.

The ICRC is continuing its representations with a view to visiting the persons arrested and detained in the wake of recent events.

Finally, the Federation is building up stocks of food and emergency non-food items in its warehouses in Tirana (Albania), Skopje (Macedonia) and Podgorica (Montenegro), with the assistance of the National Societies concerned.

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COLOMBIA

HEAVY FIGHTING ALONG THE CAGUAN

Since 1 March violent clashes have pitted Brigade No. 3 of the Colombian army against the Southern Bloc of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) between Cartagena del Chairá and Remolinos del Caguán, along the river of the same name (in the southern department of Caquetá).

The FARC reported that the fighting had left 83 people dead and 32 wounded, and asked the ICRC for assistance. Delegates evacuated the bodies from the combat zone, and are searching the area on foot for other casualties.

A total of 43 soldiers were captured by the FARC. Since it received a list of only 27 names, the ICRC is continuing its efforts around Cartagena del Chairá to obtain the names of the remaining 16 prisoners.
More than 200 people displaced by the recent fighting received assistance from ICRC delegates and Colombian Red Cross workers.

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EARTHQUAKE IN AFGHANISTAN
ROSTAQ AIRDROPS: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Hercules C-130 chartered by the ICRC to drop relief supplies over Rostaq, a town near the epicentre of the earthquake that hit northern Afghanistan last month, returned to Europe on 8 March, its mission accomplished.

A flight planned for 7 March had to be cancelled because of poor weather conditions. This means that between 19 February and 1 March, the date of the last airdrop, the plane had made 15 round trips from Peshawar, Pakistan, bringing about 200 tonnes of supplies (some 15,000 blankets and 475 tents) to supplement the assistance transported to the quake-affected area by numerous road convoys.

The Hercules had also made four flights to Mazar-i-Sharif carrying supplies needed to replenish stocks in ICRC warehouses there and in the nearby town of Pul-i-Khumri.

Despite the problems encountered on account of the bad weather, the airdrops of supplies over northern Afghanistan were crucial to the survival of the quake victims. The ICRC had carried out only two similar operations in the past, in Ethiopia and in Sudan.

According to the local authorities, the tremor which shook Takhar province on 4 February claimed 4,500 lives and left thousands of villagers without shelter. The ICRC - with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Afghan Red Crescent Society and many other humanitarian organizations - coordinated relief operations, made especially difficult by snowfalls, mudslides and the extreme cold.

Further information: Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 761 242 260

SOMALIA
OVER 9,000 CASES OF CHOLERA RECORDED IN THREE MONTHS

Since December 1997 over 9,000 people have been treated for cholera in Somalia. About 1,000 patients were treated during the same month at the "SOS Children" hospital in Mogadishu, and the capital's other medical facilities have handled 7,460 cases since the end of last year. Elsewhere in the country -- in Balad, Afgoi, Awdegle, Hawadle, Jamame and Boo -- a further 696 cases were recorded.

In cooperation with other aid agencies, the ICRC is supplying the facilities at Benadir, Bermuda, Awdegle, Hawadle, Boo, Jamame and Wanlaweyne with intravenous fluids, oral rehydration salts (ORS) and antibiotics, and restoring sanitation facilities to working order where necessary.

The ICRC is also pursuing its prevention and education programme, particularly in remote villages. Joint ICRC/Somali Red Crescent Society teams are training local health workers in preventive methods: raising public awareness of the disease, underlining the importance of hygiene and providing oral rehydration as soon as first symptoms appear. The teams are also supplying chlorine for water purification and ORS for on-the-spot treatment, thereby aiming to reduce the number of people who succumb to the disease before reaching cholera treatment centres.
"The cholera epidemic isn't over yet. In fact, many people are expecting another sharp increase in a month's time, with the arrival of the rainy season", said Verena Krebs, ICRC health delegate in charge of the programme. The exceptionally large number of people affected by the cholera -- so far almost double the total recorded throughout the epidemic in 1997 -- is partly due to the floods which have plagued East Africa since last October. "The floods have left the inhabitants vulnerable and brought about major population movements, which greatly increases the risks of the disease being transmitted".

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

UKRAINE

ASSISTANCE IN CRIMEA

In view of the ever-increasing humanitarian needs in Crimea, the ICRC has decided to provide support for the local committee of the Ukrainian Red Cross. Earlier this year, the existing Red Cross network of some 80 nurses making home visits were given medical supplies and 500 pairs of shoes for distribution, together with 20 bicycles and warm clothes to help them in their work. The Finnish Red Cross has just dispatched nearly 20 tonnes of used clothing to be handed out by the local Red Cross, which puts at around 17,500 the number of Crimea's most destitute inhabitants.

A recent survey carried out by the ICRC showed that old-age pensioners, most of whom are living in extremely precarious conditions, make up almost 30% of Crimea's population. Moreover, the region's difficulties are compounded by problems linked to the integration of 250,000 Tatars. The Crimean Tatars, who were deported to Central Asia at the end of World War II, were able to return in the early 1990s. Most of them are living in makeshift housing, often without running water or electricity, and receive insufficient social assistance.

The ICRC opened a regional delegation in Kyiv in 1996. A delegate has been monitoring the situation in Crimea since last autumn.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 23 07

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: special focus on Kosovo, dated 10.03.98
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in Sri Lanka, dated 10.03.97.

During the weekend of
14 - 15 March 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Rubén Ortega,
on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
GENEVA

FRANCE ISSUES MAJOR DECLARATION OF INTENT

In the course of an official visit on 17 March to ICRC headquarters in Geneva, where he was received by ICRC President Cornélia Sommaruga, Mr Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the French Republic, announced France's intention to ratify Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions. He went on to confirm that his country would by mid-year ratify the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. France has already taken measures to destroy its entire stock of such devices.

The ICRC welcomes this declaration of intent by the French government. To date, Protocol I - applicable to international armed conflicts - has been adhered to by 150 States. In 1984 France ratified Additional Protocol II (applicable to non-international armed conflicts), to which 142 States are today party. If France ratifies Protocol I, all NATO member States, with the exception of the United States and Turkey, will be bound by this key instrument of international humanitarian law.

Protocol I confirms and extends the scope of the protection that the parties to an international conflict are required to afford the victims, in particular civilians. It also contains provisions relating to "methods and means of warfare" deemed unacceptable. Article 35 states that "...the right of the Parties to the conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. (...) It is prohibited to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering. (...) It is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment."

To date, 188 countries are bound by the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Further information: Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 23 02

SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

TUBERCULOSIS GROWING THREAT IN PRISONS

Confronted with the emergence of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis among the prisoners they visit in a number of countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, ICRC doctors have warned that unless effective treatment programmes are provided for infectious detainees, prisons in the region will become breeding grounds for the disease and eventually exacerbate its spread by continually reinjecting it into the community.

In Baku's central penitentiary hospital, a TB programme run since 1995 by the ICRC in conjunction with the Azerbaijani Ministry of Justice has found an extremely high level of resistance to treatment. The "directly observed treatment, short course strategy" (DOTS) devised by the World Health Organization requires medical staff to ensure the daily intake of medicines by each patient for the full course of treatment (minimum six months).
Over the past three years, a total of 514 infectious detainees have been treated under the ICRC programme in Azerbaijan. Improvements observed in those hospital wards in which it has been applied have demonstrated that DOTS can be implemented with the active involvement of local staff. Of the 198 patients taking part in the programme in 1997, 160 completed their course of treatment. There was a mortality rate of 7.5% and an abandon rate of 11.6%, including those released from detention. The ICRC is hopeful that in 1998 all TB patients in the hospital concerned will benefit from DOTS.

Given the encouraging results achieved by DOTS in Baku and the fact that TB has become the primary cause of death among detainees in Georgia, the ICRC's Tbilisi delegation began a survey in 1997 to assess the disease's prevalence and resistance to drug treatment in places of detention in that country. The Georgian authorities have been closely involved in the study and preparations are under way for a treatment programme in the central penitentiary hospital.

The strict requirements of the DOTS strategy are extremely difficult to comply with in a prison environment, but the authorities must understand that to apply treatment randomly and without completing the full course is worse than providing no treatment at all, as it will cause the disease to become incurable and thus increase the number of deaths among prisoners, prison staff, their families and the community at large.

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Gillian Biddulph, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 29 86

THE AMERICAS
IMPLEMENTING HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Organization of American States (OAS) celebrated its 50th anniversary on 5 and 6 March with a "Conference of the Americas", attended by some of the region's most prominent political leaders, academics, artists and scientists. Round table discussions dealt with the main challenges facing the southern hemisphere: globalized trade, education, sustainable development, strengthening democratic institutions, fighting poverty and inequality, and promoting human rights. The conference's highlight was a multidisciplinary meeting of Nobel prize-winners from the Americas. The ICRC, which concluded a cooperation agreement with the OAS in 1996, was represented by its new permanent Vice-President, Ms Anne Petitpierre, who together with several leading figures from the region led a debate on the future of international humanitarian law and human rights.

On 12 March the ICRC presented a report to the OAS Permanent Council's committee on political and juridical affairs regarding the measures undertaken by member States at the national level to implement international humanitarian law. The report - prepared by the ICRC's advisory service on humanitarian law with the aim of facilitating a broad exchange of information among the organization's member States - was compiled following a resolution adopted by the OAS General Assembly in June of last year, asking members to take into consideration the information on national implementation regularly provided by the ICRC.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 24 54
Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 23 02
BRAZIL

HUMANITARIAN LAW PROGRAMME FOR MILITARY POLICE

An ICRC delegate specializing in the teaching of humanitarian law to armed and security forces was in Brasilia from 2 to 9 March to initiate an extensive programme for Brazil's military police. Over the next two years, training will be given to some 300 instructors who, in turn, will teach the basic principles of humanitarian and human rights law to an estimated 600,000 members of the military police. While in the Brazilian capital, the ICRC delegate set up the training programme for the coming months, provided teaching materials and selected 20 military police officers who will be in charge of the future instructors. The ICRC will also take part in a national conference of generals commanding units of the military police in April.

At the invitation of the military police in the state of São Paulo, the delegate also gave a one-day seminar for all military police unit commanders in the state. With 82,000 men, the Sao Paulo force is the largest in the country.

Finally, the ICRC agreed to launch a pilot project in São Paulo that will include instruction in the basic provisions of human rights law. The course will be attended by some 250 police instructors.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 24 54

BOLIVIA

VISITS TO DETAINEES

Two delegates travelled to Bolivia from 1 to 6 March to visit 21 detainees in three prisons in La Paz and the surrounding area. The visits had originally been scheduled for February but had to be postponed owing to tensions in the country's prisons which have since eased. The delegates also held discussions with the prison authorities. The visits were carried out in accordance with the agreement signed in 1997 between the Bolivian government and the ICRC.

The delegates took the opportunity presented by their mission to meet the Secretary General of the Bolivian Red Cross in order to discuss details of joint projects to be carried out in 1998 by the National Society and the ICRC.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 24 54

During the weekend of 21-22 March 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
On 23 March, an ICRC-chartered aircraft flew a team of delegates from the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown to Kenema, where they delivered 700 kg of medicines, which had arrived by truck the previous day, to two clinics run by the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society and to the town's main hospital, which has been supported by the ICRC since early 1997.

The ICRC, which had suspended relief work outside Freetown owing to the recent fighting, has now been able to assess the medical needs, food situation and clean water supply of Kenema's residents, displaced people and those detained as a result of the fighting. Delegates hope to resume relief work in the next few weeks in areas where security conditions permit.

In Freetown, delegates working with National Society volunteers have completed a distribution of food and other supplies to persons whose homes were destroyed in the recent fighting and looting. In addition, one-time food distributions were made in March to displaced people and Liberian refugees as well as to some 6,500 people in various public institutions such as hospitals and orphanages. The ICRC plans to continue providing food aid to such facilities over the next two months.

Delegates regularly visit more than 1,000 detainees being held at Freetown's central prison, where they also distribute personal hygiene items to new arrivals.

Further information: Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 241 438

The ICRC launched a large-scale agricultural aid programme in northern Uganda on 5 March. Its aim is to enable more than 260,000 persons displaced by the conflict between government forces and rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army to grow their own food.

On 16 March, 50,000 residents of the Pabbo camp for displaced people, 50 kilometres north-west of Gulu, received hoes and more than 100 tonnes of seed. Christina is a woman living in one of the endless rows of straw huts that make up the camp. "I am a widow and have five children to feed," she explains. "Food is my biggest problem." The supplies provided by the United Nations' World Food Programme – with which the ICRC is coordinating its own distributions – together with the harvest expected from the seed distributed by the ICRC, should significantly improve the situation of displaced people. The ICRC programme was timed to coincide with the planting season, with harvesting expected to take place in June-July. Distributions will be carried out over three weeks with the help of several dozen volunteers from the Uganda Red Cross Society and almost 30 ICRC employees.
Each family has access to a plot of land suitable for cultivation, located either on the periphery of the camps or part of the fields owned by the family near its home (in which case they must leave the fields at nightfall and return to the camp). Each family receives nine kg of locally purchased maize, bean and sorghum seed, as well as a hoe and vegetable-seed kit.

In all, 465 tonnes of seed, 52,000 hoes and as many seed kits will be distributed in 18 camps for displaced people in the Gulu and Kitgum districts. Gilles Le Goff, the ICRC relief coordinator in Kampala, summed up the operation: "Our aim is to help displaced people regain their self-sufficiency".

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++ 2542 716 339

CÔTE D'IVOIRE
LOCAL OFFICIALS DISCUSS HUMANITARIAN LAW

On 23 March a group of some 30 senior local officials gathered in the Ivorian capital Yamoussoukro for the first in a series of three-day seminars on international humanitarian law organized by the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire.

Intended for senior officials from prefectures around the country, the event is the first of its kind in Africa and is being arranged in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior and National Integration. Its aim is to provide the participants with information on the humanitarian treaties by which their country is bound and to make them aware of the rules applicable in the event of armed conflict or internal violence.

Workshops will be held on subjects such as implementing humanitarian law during conflict, incorporating that law into Ivorian legislation, humanitarian law and the maintenance of public order, and the ICRC's activities to prevent violations of humanitarian law and protect the victims of conflict.

The Yamoussoukro meeting is also an opportunity to explain to civilian authorities the reasons why the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement must always observe the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence in its work.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Abidjan, tel. ++ 225 22 24 59

INDONESIA
RELIEF WORK CONTINUES IN IRIAN JAYA

The relief survey and distributions launched in November 1997 by the Indonesian Red Cross Society and the ICRC in the highlands of Irian Jaya have overcome enormous logistical hurdles and now begun to show results. From November to the end of January, approximately 15,000 victims of an unprecedented drought received medical assistance and emergency food aid. Helicopters flew supplies to 19 villages in Mimika district, a mountainous region in the heart of Irian Jaya. Last year, malnutrition and malaria wreaked havoc there among its population of farmers, who had been forced to flee to the forests or to low-lying valleys because of fighting between the Indonesian army and the Organisasi Papua Merdeka, or Free Papua Movement, a Papua rebel group.
The nutritional and health situation of the region's most vulnerable inhabitants, which was considered disastrous as 1997 drew to an end, has now gradually improved. In some villages the incidence of malaria has fallen from 80% to 20%. Regular distributions of rice and high-protein biscuits have enabled farmers in Mimika district to avoid premature harvesting and consumption of sweet potatoes, the local staple food.

Since February, teams from the ICRC and Indonesian Red Cross have turned their attention to surveying the Wamena region and the Baliem valley in Jayawijaya, to the east. Initial reports indicate that the medical and nutritional situation in the area, which has also been struck by famine and malaria, is every bit as bad as in the Mimika district. Emergency relief is currently being planned for about 10,000 people in the area.

Further information: Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 29 06

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in Irian Jaya, dated 24.03.98

During the weekend of 28 - 29 March 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Rubén Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
TAJIKISTAN
RENEWED OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE

The fighting that has been raging around Kofarnikhon, 20 km east of the capital Dushanbe, has already claimed close to 100 victims since violence flared up again on 24 March. More than 30 wounded have been registered in hospitals in Dushanbe which have received ICRC emergency medical supplies. As security conditions are preventing ICRC delegates from reaching Kofarnikhon, the local branch of the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan has delivered medical aid to the local hospital, which is reportedly treating several dozen war wounded.

The ICRC has been working in the country since late 1992. Its activities focus on assistance to detainees and on medical aid for hospitals and other health facilities. Tajikistan is suffering severe hardship as a result of years of conflict between the government and the Islamist opposition and the economic crisis besetting the country.

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

PERU
VISITS TO DETAINNEES AND AID FOR VICTIMS OF EL NIÑO

To help combat a cholera epidemic in La Merced prison, the ICRC last week provided the detaining authorities with cleaning products, chlorine and rehydration salts.

Over the past few weeks, ICRC delegates have visited 1,380 detainees (about 60 of them for the first time) in places of detention under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. They also saw some 80 people (20 of them for the first time) held in facilities run by the Ministry of the Interior, and visited a dozen detainees in places under the authority of the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the delegation in Lima gave talks to the staff of the Chorrillos, Miguel Castro Castro and Yanamayo prisons to explain the ICRC's work for detainees.

The El Niño weather phenomenon is continuing to wreak havoc in Peru. The authorities have declared a state of emergency in 15 of the country's 23 departments. The death toll has been estimated at over 200 and the number of people affected by the disaster at around 350,000. The departments of Cuzco and Cajamarca are the hardest hit, and the road between Lima and Huancayo has also been badly damaged, cutting the capital off from its main...
source of food supplies. The ICRC has given logistic support to the Peruvian Red Cross and the other National Societies taking part in the operation to assist disaster victims, which is being conducted with the help of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2454

ARGENTINA

MILITARY PEACE-KEEPING EXERCISE

From 16 to 18 March the ICRC regional delegate took part in a military peace-keeping exercise entitled Blue Condor, organized jointly by the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Relations and the British and Argentine armed forces. The exercise was held at the Campo de Mayo centre, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. It was attended by some 60 participants from the armed forces, the police and the ministries of foreign affairs of numerous countries in the Americas, two European countries (France and Spain), and representatives of various United Nations departments, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of American States. The ICRC was the only non-governmental organization invited.

Four exercises simulated various aspects of the planning and implementation stages of a peace-keeping operation. The scenario was designed in such a way as to combine all the obstacles encountered by UN peace-keeping missions in various theatres of operation during the 1990s. The participants first had to draw up a plan to restore peace among different factions in a fictitious country; this plan having failed, they were then asked to draft the general outline of a Security Council resolution authorizing the dispatch of a peace-keeping mission. Lastly, they had to establish a plan of action and deal with the initial difficulties facing the mission. Each exercise was commented on by experts, under the leadership of General van Kappen, of the UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2454

HUNGARY

ONE MORE STEP AWAY FROM LANDMINES

A three-day regional conference on anti-personnel landmines hosted by the Hungarian government in Budapest ended on 28 March with a declaration by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga that mines were "weapons of the past, not of the future". The conference, which comprised parallel two-day seminars sponsored by the ICRC and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines respectively, brought together representatives of governments and non-governmental organizations from 19 Central and Eastern European countries.
The ICRC seminar, attended by representatives of the region's ministries of defence and foreign affairs, focused on the human cost and military utility of anti-personnel mines. The participants heard powerful evidence from outside military experts that, on the basis of their actual use, the military effectiveness of anti-personnel mines was extremely questionable, especially for the protection of long, unguarded borders. It was pointed out that alternatives already existed to fulfil the functions of these weapons in military doctrine.

The participants in the seminar adopted a very strong final declaration stating that the human cost of anti-personnel mines far outweighed their limited military utility and urging early adherence to the Ottawa treaty. The declaration was fully endorsed by all the participants in their personal capacity except for those from Belarus and the Russian Federation, who expressed support for its humanitarian objectives but were not able to agree with all its conclusions. Ten governments in the region have already signed the Ottawa treaty, and during the conference Hungarian President Arpad Goncz signed his country's instrument of ratification.

Further information: Stuart Maslen, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2533

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- ICRC Facts and figures: ICRC physical rehabilitation programmes for the war-disabled: 1997

During the weekend of 4 - 5 April 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Amanda Williamson, on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
In many cases, the analysis indicates a significant decrease in the number of cases. This change is particularly evident when compared to previous years. However, the decrease does not appear to be consistent across all regions. In some areas, the number of cases has remained relatively stable, while in others, it has dropped significantly. Further investigation is required to understand the underlying factors contributing to these variations.
AFGHANISTAN
MORE DETAINES RELEASED

On the occasion of the religious festival of Eid al-Dha, which marks the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca, last Sunday the Taliban authorities released 118 detainees in Kandahar, most of them of Hazara origin. ICRC delegates talked with every newly released detainee in private and then gave all of them financial assistance so that they could return to their provinces of origin. To make it easier for them to cross check-points, the head of security in Kandahar issued travel permits.

The releases follow those of 30 March, when 65 persons held by the forces of Commander Massoud were freed in Panjshir in the presence of the ICRC, which also supplied fuel for the trucks that took the former detainees as far as the front line north-east of Kabul.

The parties to the Afghan conflict had already freed 600 detainees in January this year to mark the end of Ramadan. In 1997 the ICRC registered over 7,000 detainees in 81 places of detention throughout the country.

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

SIERRA LEONE
ICRC RESUMES WORK UP-COUNTRY

Following an initial delivery of medical supplies to Kenema on 22 March, the ICRC provided the town's government hospital with a second consignment of medicines on 2 April to help treat emergency cases. The hospital reported that 40 operations had been performed on war-wounded patients since the end of February.

On 31 March, for the first time since delegates suspended their activities up-country owing to the recent fighting, an ICRC team returned to Bo, Sierra Leone's second largest town. Contacts were re-established with local authorities in order to gather information on the situation in terms of nutrition, health and water supplies. ICRC delegates also visited detainees held by ECOMOG forces and gave them blankets and items for personal hygiene.

Thanks to cooperation with the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS), Red Cross messages can now be delivered to areas outside Freetown, such as Bo, Moyamba, Makeni, Port Loko and Lungi, so that family members can stay in touch despite the interruption of normal channels of communication.
As the fighting died down in the northern provinces, rehabilitation work resumed last week on 55 wells in Bombali district and Port Loko town. Wells are the only source of drinking water for the inhabitants of some villages, and ICRC water and sanitation engineers together with Ministry of Health staff are working against the clock to complete the project before the start of the rainy season.

In the first three months after the fighting ended in Freetown, five primary health-care clinics receiving ICRC support gave consultations to 40,000 patients and immunized 850 children in accordance with EPI (WHO's Expanded Programme on Immunization) standards. During the same period the ICRC, working in cooperation with the SLRCS, distributed a total of 483 tonnes of food to 36,877 people in the capital.

**Further information:** Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 22 241 438

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**SUDAN**

**ASSISTANCE FOR DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE EAST**

Since the end of January, several thousand people have been displaced by artillery attacks on their villages in the Kassala region of eastern Sudan, along the Eritrean border. At the end of March the number of displaced was estimated at more than 4,750 families, comprising some 24,000 people. The region where they took refuge is particularly arid, offering no possibilities for agricultural activity. It is rendered even more hostile by the presence of landmines hidden in the ground, which are having a devastating effect on the displaced population.

The Sudanese Red Crescent, with support from the ICRC, regularly evacuates people wounded by artillery fire or landmines to the civilian and military hospitals in the towns of Kassala and Khartoum. More than 50 casualties have been treated to date. The hospitals have been given emergency medical assistance and dispensaries have been set up in the sites where the displaced families have settled.

More than 100 Red Crescent volunteers have been mobilized to register the displaced people and to distribute blankets, jerrycans, kitchen sets, mosquito nets and soap. The United Nations World Food Programme is carrying out food distributions, while Oxfam is supplying clean water.

The ICRC has been in Sudan since 1978 and is currently preparing to resume operations in the south of the country, which were suspended in November 1996. Providing support for the Sudanese Red Crescent is one of the ICRC's traditional activities in a country suffering the effects of more than 14 years of conflict.

**Further information:** Pierre Ryter, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464

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**REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

**OPEN DAY FOR THE BRAZZAVILLE MEDIA**

About 20 representatives of the local press were delighted to accept the ICRC's invitation to attend an "open day" organized for them in Brazzaville on 27 March.
The event, which was the first of its kind to be held since the end of the conflict in the Republic of the Congo, took place at the headquarters of the Congolese Red Cross. It gave the journalists an opportunity not only to become better acquainted with the ICRC's operation in the country but also to exchange views with the head of delegation and the staff in charge of each field of activity.

The ICRC has been working in Congo-Brazzaville on a permanent basis since 1993. At present it is still providing assistance for the victims of the conflict that ravaged the country last year. In the area of protection and assistance for detainees, negotiations are under way between the ICRC and the Congolese government on a memorandum of understanding that would give the organization access to all detainees and all places of detention in the Republic.

The ICRC delegation in Congo-Brazzaville comprises 15 expatriate and 120 locally hired staff.

Further information: France Hurtubise, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. ++ 2431 2 34 191

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/NORTHERN CAUCASUS
VILLAGE DESTROYED BY MUDSLIDE

Torrential rains last week triggered mudslides that destroyed almost 500 homes in a village in north-eastern Chechnya, not far from the border with Dagestan. The local Red Cross committee responded immediately to the emergency by distributing 200 food parcels and 400 hygiene kits that the ICRC had supplied as part of its programme of cooperation and support for the local Red Cross committees in the seven republics of the northern Caucasus.

For security reasons the ICRC carries out its assistance activities in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan from its subdelegation in Nalchik, in Kabardino-Balkaria, with the help of its local staff and the local committees of the Russian Red Cross.

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

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update No 98/02 on ICRC activities in Somalia, dated 6.04.98

During the days 10 and 11 April 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty, Doris Pfister, on (mobile) ++ 41 79 202 36 70, and the 12 and 13 April, please call duty press officer Philippe Lazzarini on ++ 41 79 333 20 46 (mobile)
SOMALIA

TEN RED CROSS / RED CRESCENT STAFF ABDUCTED IN MOGADISHU

The ICRC has maintained round-the-clock contact with Somali elders in Mogadishu who have been endeavouring to secure the release of the 10 people abducted on Wednesday 15 April as their Red Cross aircraft landed in Mogadishu North.

The elders, the most respected figures in Somali society, have been in touch with the abductors and have confirmed to the ICRC that they have seen the 10 individuals (five ICRC expatriates, two delegates from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, one staff member of the Somali Red Crescent Society and the two pilots of the plane involved) and that they are in good health.

Given the gravity of the situation, the ICRC and the Federation have decided to withdraw their remaining expatriates to the operational base in Nairobi. One ICRC expatriate will stay with the Somali Red Crescent Society in Mogadishu in order to maintain contacts with the elders.

The ICRC has also been in touch with Somali leaders in Nairobi, who are presently on their way back to Somalia. All have assured the ICRC of their commitment to an immediate and unconditional release of the kidnapped aid workers.

Further information: Josue Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281
preparation of a sample for analysis, one should be aware of the following:

1. The sample should be representative of the material to be analyzed.
2. The sample should be free from contaminants or impurities.
3. The sample should be in a suitable form for the analytical method to be used.

Additionally, it is important to note that the accuracy of the analysis depends on the quality of the sample preparation.
SENEGAL
ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISPLACED

From 15 to 21 April the regional committee of the Red Cross in Ziguinchor (Casamance) distributed some 80 tonnes of food to 15,000 displaced people who had previously been registered by the National Society. The distributions were carried out under cooperation programmes set up between the ICRC and the Senegalese Red Cross Society. Since mid-1997 the southern region of Casamance has been the scene of renewed clashes between the Senegalese armed forces and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance.

In early March the ICRC provided the regional hospital in Ziguinchor with one tonne of medicines to build up emergency stocks for the treatment of people wounded in the fighting. It also visited 235 persons arrested in connection with the events.

Previous distributions of food and medical supplies had been carried out by the Senegalese Red Cross and the ICRC respectively during the second half of 1997 and in early 1998.

Further information: Gilbert Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel.: ++ 221 8 241 293

SOMALIA
RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT HOSTAGE CRISIS ENTERS SECOND WEEK

The ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies remain extremely concerned that the ten people abducted a week ago on landing at Isley airstrip in Mogadishu North have still not been released.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional release of its staff.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
ICRC OPENS OFFICE IN BUNIA

On 7 April the ICRC opened an office in Bunia, the main town of one of the districts situated along the border between Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Its activities there will focus on helping Congolese nationals displaced from elsewhere in the country and Sudanese refugees living in Congo-Kinshasa or in Uganda to re-establish contact with their relatives by means of Red Cross messages.
In addition to evaluating the situation in regions bordering Uganda and Sudan, the ICRC delegate in charge of the new office will set up the necessary infrastructure in preparation for the arrival of a British Red Cross team which will conduct a water and sanitation programme in the area.

The office in Bunia is manned by one expatriate and one local employee. Overall, the ICRC's delegation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo comprises 53 expatriates and 650 Congolese staff.

Further information: France Hurtubise, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. ++243 1 2 34 191

COLOMBIA
ON THE MOVE

The latest upsurge in violence in several regions of Colombia has caused many people to flee their homes, and the ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross have launched emergency relief operations to assist the newly displaced. In the region of Urabá, for instance, some 110 people who fled the fighting have sought shelter in San José de Apartadó. Some families do try to return home as soon as possible, as has been noted in the Pavarando reception centre, where only around 1,600 displaced remain.

In the department of Córdoba, around 400 people have left the region of Nudo del Paramillo and moved towards Tierradentro and Juan José (Puerto Libertador). The local branch of the Colombian Red Cross and delegates from the ICRC's sub-delegation in Apartadó have started providing them with emergency aid.

In the eastern reaches of the department of Antioquia, over 200 people fled the San Rafael area following clashes between paramilitary groups and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In its capacity as a neutral intermediary between the parties to the conflict, the ICRC has stepped in to supply emergency relief assistance. In the west of the same department, about a dozen families who wanted to return to their places of origin in Nudo del Paramillo were prevented from doing so and have had to seek refuge elsewhere, this time in the region of Ituango.

Lastly, in La Guajira, one of the departments least affected by the internal conflict, several incidents reported since the beginning of the year have driven some inhabitants from their homes. A first group of 43 families has already received aid from the Colombian Red Cross and the ICRC.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2454

RUSSIAN FEDERATION
COMBINING THE STUDY OF ENGLISH
AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

In February 1997 the ICRC's Moscow delegation and the Russian State Military University, which is run by the country's Defence Ministry, undertook to produce jointly a bilingual Russian/English manual on international humanitarian law; the project has been successfully
completed, and the handbook is already being used in the English course for fourth-year law students. It includes extracts from "Constraints on the waging of war" by Frits Kalshoven and "Handbook on the law of war for armed forces" by Frédéric de Mulinen, as well as from the Geneva Conventions and other instruments of international humanitarian law.

The handbook was designed and compiled by the head of the University's Chair of English, in cooperation with ICRC experts and with ICRC financial support. Its aim is to help future military lawyers broaden their knowledge of the law of armed conflict by studying specialized texts in translation.

The textbook, the first of its kind, has been so well received that the University's Chair of French has expressed a keen interest in producing a French-language version. In addition, there is every reason to believe that it could also be used in civilian institutions of higher education specializing in foreign languages and international law.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2307
Victoria Catliff, ICRC Moscow, tel. ++7502 220 2616

AWARD FOR THE ICRC
TRIBUTE TO TRUCK DRIVERS WORKING FOR THE HUMANITARIAN CAUSE

At a ceremony held on 23 April in Marrakesh, Morocco, where its 26th World Conference is currently taking place, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) presented its Grand Prix d'Honneur award to the ICRC.

In his address, IRU President David C. Green stressed that this symbolic gesture, accompanied by a substantial donation, demonstrated that partnership initiatives strongly encouraged between the public and private sectors could also effectively bring together international organizations pursuing economic or humanitarian objectives. He encouraged IRU members to follow this example at the national level.

Peter Arbenz, a member of the Committee who represented the ICRC at the award ceremony, stated that the ICRC fully supported the partnership philosophy because, like the IRU, the organization operated worldwide, was not influenced by political, religious or racial considerations, and served the interests of the general public. He also highlighted the fact that road transport was indispensable for the ICRC, which made constant use of it when conducting its activities in aid of victims of war and violence the world over.

Driving together for a better future" is the motto chosen by the IRU to mark the 50th anniversary of its founding.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2384

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org :
- Update 98/05 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 17.04.98

During the weekend of 25 - 26 April 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Kim Gordon-Bates, on (mobile) 41 79 357 50 03
ICRC HEADQUARTERS

ICRC APPROVES PLAN OF ACTION

At its meeting on 29 and 30 April, the ICRC Assembly endorsed a plan of action designed to enable the organization to give effect to the policy decisions adopted in December 1997 in the framework of the major study on the future of the ICRC (see communication to the press No. 97/36 of 16 December 1997).

The ICRC's work for conflict victims will continue along four lines: bringing humanitarian action close to the victims and redefining such action with a view to the long term; strengthening dialogue with all the players on the scene of a conflict; reassessing the nature of independent humanitarian action and promoting international humanitarian law; and improving the organization's efficiency. Some 130 specific measures have been adopted to enable the ICRC to reach its objectives in the short, medium and long terms.

The plan of action provides for structural changes to the internal organization of the ICRC. It aims to increase the autonomy of ICRC delegations, to make savings in the headquarters budget in the medium term, and to establish a highly developed self-evaluation procedure. These measures will gradually be introduced from 1 May 1998 up to the end of the first quarter of the year 2001.

Over a year ago the ICRC initiated a wide-ranging discussion and consultation process prompted by changes in the nature of current conflicts and developments anticipated in the future. This involved the entire organization both at headquarters and in the field. The plan of action sets out the practical measures stemming from this reflection process.

A document (in English and French) summarizing the main features of the plan will be available on request from Monday 4 May.

Philippe Lazzarini, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2190

COLOMBIA

AMERICAN HOSTAGES FREED

Three United States citizens captured on 23 March 1998 by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were handed over last week to an ICRC team including Colombian Red Cross workers in the mountainous region of Los Alpes, some 100 km south-east of Bogotá. A woman hostage was freed on 24 April, and her two companions were released the next day. All three were immediately taken to Villavicencio and then flown on a Red Cross plane to Bogotá, where they were handed over to United States embassy staff.
In a bid to ensure greater compliance with the basic rules of international humanitarian law, the ICRC maintains contact with nearly all irregular armed groups in Colombia, whether guerrilla forces or private self-defence organizations. In incidents involving hostage-taking, the ICRC seeks to obtain confirmation from the captors that they are indeed holding the people concerned, to enable the hostages to get in touch with their families by means of Red Cross messages, and to gain access to them to make sure that they are well treated and in good health.

At times the ICRC may step in to facilitate the hostages' release, but only if asked by the families and the abductors. Delegates never become involved in any negotiations concerning the release of the captives. The ICRC delegation in Colombia is currently following some 500 cases of persons held by irregular armed groups. In 1997, it helped in the release of 270 people.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2454

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

HEALTH PROGRAMME IN ORIENTAL PROVINCE

The health programme launched eight months ago by the Belgian Red Cross, to which the ICRC delegated the project, is proving to be a success. The aim of the programme is to carry out repairs and develop primary healthcare services in seven of the 18 health centres in the Kabondo health district of the Oriental province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"We have specific medical objectives", explained project leader Dr Valérie Alaluf, who is working with a team of locally recruited personnel. "Our goal is basically to attract more people to the centres by providing better treatment and preventive care."

Dr Alaluf is lending her expertise to upgrade the skills of health centre staff in the care of pregnant women and pre-school children, and is also helping to train midwives.

With the support of the local population, the team renovating the centres has finished work in two towns, Yabiso and Yetu, and in two rural areas, Madula and Wanierekula. The other three centres - Foyer, Konga-Konga and Bafwaboli - will be ready by the end of August 1998.

The results are already visible, and the nurse in charge of Yabiso health centre, Avobuma Sidomie, is overjoyed. "We used to see barely 20 people a day. Since the centre was renovated, the number of daily consultations has doubled and many young mothers are coming to us."

Further information: France Hurtubise, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. ++243 12 34 191

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Fact sheet on ICRC activities in Sri Lanka, dated 24.04.98

During the weekend of 2 - 3 May 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Amanda Williamson, on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
TAJIKISTAN
MORE VICTIMS

Fighting last week 12 km east of the Tajik capital Dushanbe claimed the lives of dozens of people, mostly civilians. The ICRC acted immediately to provide assistance for the wounded at medical facilities in the city. Staff at ICRC warehouses and a limb-fitting centre in the combat zone were evacuated. Once calm had been restored, aid work resumed.

Several dozen people were also killed at the end of April in landslides caused by melting snow and torrential rain which lashed the Garm valley in central Tajikistan. Coordinating its activities with other international organizations, the ICRC distributed food and blankets to 68 stricken families. Garm hospital also received medical assistance.

The ICRC has been working in Tajikistan since the end of 1992, with the focus on assistance to detainees and medical aid to hospitals. Years of conflict between government and opposition plus an unprecedented economic crisis have brought the country to its knees.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 23 07

AFGHANISTAN
MORTAL REMAINS TRANSPORTED BY ICRC

On 30 April, in response to a request from the Taliban authorities, the ICRC brought back to Kabul the mortal remains of 10 combatants of the Islamic militia killed a few days earlier in clashes with Commander Massoud's troops 25 km north of the capital. Because of the poor security conditions on this front line, the operation was conducted by air.

An ICRC Beechcraft carrying 1,700 kg of medical supplies for the prisoners and wounded held by the anti-Taliban coalition flew from Kabul to Bagram, a military airport in territory controlled by the coalition. On its return flight the aircraft transported the mortal remains of the Taliban combatants, which had been brought to Charikar hospital. A crowd of over a hundred Taliban militiamen and dignitaries, including the Minister of Health, had gathered to await the plane's arrival in Kabul.

Visits to the Panjshir valley

ICRC delegates have just carried out a complete visit to four places of detention in the Panjshir valley, which enabled them in particular to assess the state of health of prisoners held by the Massoud forces. During the visit nearly 2,000 family messages were exchanged. After
NEWS

Panjshir, the next complete ICRC visits will be to places of detention in the Taliban-held Kandahar region.

The ICRC visited some 8,865 detainees in 74 places of detention in Afghanistan in 1997. It also arranged for the exchange of 53,000 family messages between separated family members.

Further information: Juan Martínez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 382 280 131

JORDAN

ICRC ORGANIZES FAMILY VISITS TO DETAINEES

A total of 25 persons, including women and children, left Amman on 4 May for an ICRC-organized visit to relatives currently detained in the central prison in Kuwait. One other person arriving from Beirut joined the group to participate in the visit, which was coordinated with the authorities concerned in both Kuwait and Jordan.

The visit was the fourth of its kind arranged by the ICRC, two previous ones having taken place in June and September 1995, plus a third in January 1997. A total of 133 family members have thus been able to meet detained relatives, most of whom have been separated from their spouses and children since the end of the 1991 Gulf war. Through its delegations in Amman and Kuwait, the ICRC has meanwhile been forwarding Red Cross messages between the detainees and their families, as well as monitoring conditions of detention, in line with its mandate.

Further information: Mu'in Kassis, ICRC Amman, tel. ++9626 56 88 645

SENEGAL

YOUSSOU N'DOUR IN ZIGUINCHOR

Top Senegalese musician Youssou N'Dour has just paid a visit to Ziguinchor, the main town in the Casamance region of southern Senegal, at the invitation of the Senegalese Red Cross and the ICRC, a matter of days before World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May.

During the visit the Senegalese star presented "Music goes to war", the documentary film about the So Why? album title track, to secondary school pupils in Ziguinchor. The film traces the journey made by the six African musicians who composed and performed the songs on the album and, through the ICRC, met victims of conflict on the African continent (South Africa, Angola, Liberia and Kenya). After showing the documentary, the singer gave a performance of the song Solidarité, with the 2,000 people present immediately joining in.

In the coming months Senegalese Red Cross volunteers will be organizing further showings of the documentary in the area around Ziguinchor. At these sessions 20,000 copies of a textbook designed by the ICRC containing information on the Red Cross and its principles will be distributed to schoolchildren.
Youssou N'Dour also inaugurated a new Red Cross health centre in Ziguinchor, named after Red Cross founder Henry Dunant, the 170th anniversary of whose birth is being celebrated on 8 May. The centre, built as a result of Senegalese Red Cross-ICRC cooperation, will give the disadvantaged local population access to basic medical care.

Finally, the musician visited patients at the regional hospital in Ziguinchor, where the number of wounded increased following renewed hostilities between the Senegalese army and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance last summer. Hundreds of injured people have been treated there, and the ICRC has supplied 1,700 kg of medical equipment since November 1997. Youssou N'Dour was particularly moved at the sight of a three-year-old girl who had lost a leg in a mine explosion.

Further information: Abdou Latif M'Backe, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293

KENYA

TRAINING COURSE FOR WATER ENGINEERS

Water – the fundamental source of life on the planet – is a vital element in the assistance provided by the ICRC and other NGOs to hundreds of displaced persons, conflict and natural disaster victims, and recipients of medical care. But the precious liquid is sometimes only found deep in the ground, and for this reason sophisticated drilling equipment and techniques are essential.

From 21 to 28 April the ICRC held a course in Nairobi for its water and sanitation engineers. Engineers from other organizations also took part. Two light drilling machines capable of sinking boreholes between 60 and 120 metres were used. The site chosen for the course – close to Ngong village west of Nairobi – was one where a borehole was actually needed, thus facing the 18 participants with real working conditions. After several problems caused by the complex geology of the site were solved, water was eventually struck at a depth of about 60 metres. The final depth of the borehole was nearly 90 metres, with an estimated yield of 7,000 litres per hour, enough to meet the nearby villages' needs.

The training course is one of several designed to improve water engineers' skills and increase their knowledge and experience of new equipment, thus enabling them better to protect victims' lives.

Further information: Josue Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update No. 98/01 on ICRC activities in the Republic of Congo, dated 04.05.98

During the weekend of 9 - 10 May 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Kim Gordon-Bates, on (mobile) 41 79 357 50 03
null
MOROCCO/WESTERN SAHARA
VISIT TO MOROCCAN PRISONERS HELD BY THE POLISARIO FRONT

From 26 April to 2 May five ICRC delegates, including a doctor, visited 649 of the 1,800 Moroccan prisoners being held by the Polisario Front in the Tindouf region of Algeria and 84 prisoners who had been freed in April 1997 and are now awaiting repatriation. All the prisoners seen were given the opportunity to send Red Cross messages and photos to their families.

At the end of the visit, the ICRC regional delegate met a high-ranking member of the Polisario Front to discuss the prisoners' health and the logistical problems involved in their repatriation. The Polisario Front agreed to let the ICRC repatriate those whose condition was considered serious by the ICRC doctor. No date has been set for the simultaneous release of all the prisoners provided for under the UN settlement plan.

The ICRC is highly concerned about the welfare of these men, most of whom have been held in captivity for more than 15 years, and is eager for a solution to be found that will enable both the prisoners and Sahrawi refugees to return home without delay. As for missing combatants, the ICRC is ready to do everything in its power to help the parties elucidate their fate.

Further information: Werner Kaspar, ICRC Tunis, tel. ++216 1 789 134
INDONESIA

RED CROSS RISES TO THE CHALLENGE

Since violence erupted in Indonesia, initially on several university campuses and subsequently in the streets of all the major cities of Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi, the ICRC has provided active support for the medical and relief activities of the Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia). The volunteers and ambulances of the Indonesian National Society have been hard at work for the last ten days. They evacuated the first casualties among the students of Trisakti University in Jakarta, and managed to bring assistance to hundreds of people trapped and burned during the looting of a number of supermarkets in the capital.

Early last week, one tonne of medicines and other medical supplies was dispatched from ICRC headquarters in Geneva to the Indonesian capital and placed at disposal of the Indonesian Red Cross. The National Society has 16 ambulances, 40 trained volunteers, 100 first-aiders and 10 instructors in Jakarta. Its present needs in terms of equipment (five radio handsets, five stretchers, Red Cross vests, 16 canisters of oxygen and the necessary first-aid material) will be met from ICRC stocks in the country. A recent outbreak of dengue fever which caused much concern and placed an added burden on the Indonesian Red Cross blood services seems to be on the decline.

Assistance has also been offered to several universities, and since 14 May the ICRC regional delegation in Jakarta has been in daily contact with the medical staff at Trisakti University.

Meanwhile, the ICRC is continuing its representations to the Indonesian authorities with a view to gaining access to all security detainees.

The ICRC has been working in Indonesia since the 1970s. Between 1974 and 1978 its delegates visited some 40,000 detainees (mainly communists) held in connection with the attempted coup d'etat of 1965. It established a presence in East Timor in 1974 and still maintains an office in Dili, acting as a neutral intermediary between the civilian population and the Indonesian authorities. The main thrust of the regional delegation's activities remains its protection work in Indonesia and East Timor and the medical and relief operation currently being conducted in the highlands of Irian Jaya.

The ICRC has 17 expatriates and more than 50 locally recruited employees in Indonesia.

Further information: Sri R. Wahyu Endah, ICRC Jakarta, tel. ++6221 720 7252
Joerg Stoecklin, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 2906

COLOMBIA

FLYING OUT TO SAFETY

In an attack launched by armed elements on the village of Puerto Elvira, in Colombia's southern department of Meta on 4 May, some 20 people were killed and a number of shops and buildings destroyed or burnt down.

The next day a joint ICRC/Colombian Red Cross team flew to Puerto Elvira on a DC-3 chartered by the ICRC. Several bodies, together with accompanying family members, were immediately taken to the town of Villavicencio. The operation was carried out by air because this is the only safe way in and out of the area concerned.
On 7 May the ICRC organized five more flights to bring supplies to the inhabitants and evacuate those who, fearing for their safety, had expressed the wish to leave Puerto Elvira. On arrival in Villavicencio the evacuees were assisted by the Colombian Red Cross and the Pastoral social, which provided them with emergency aid and temporary housing.

The operation continued until early last week, by which time a total of 450 people had been evacuated. Several hundred others have fled by road or by boat, so that at present no more than a fifth of the original population of 2,500 still remain in Puerto Elvira.

Further information: Rolin Wavre, ICRC Bogotá, tel. ++571 636 7094
François Musy, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 22 26

SIERRA LEONE

RACING AGAINST TIME TO SUPPLY SEED FOR PLANTING SEASON

The new outbreak of fighting in February, followed by looting and harassment of civilians, forced many people to leave their homes and their belongings. Thousands were reduced to struggling for the survival of their families.

The ICRC and the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society are conducting a joint operation to distribute some 180 tonnes of upland rice seed to 60,000 people in seven chiefdoms in the Tonkolili and Kenema districts. Distributions are due to begin on 20 May. Each beneficiary will also receive a food ration to ensure proper use of the seeds.

"Thanks to the good results achieved with last year's agricultural programmes, many farming families can still live on their reserves, provided they were able to save them from looters", said Hélène Cunat, ICRC relief coordinator in Freetown. "But if the seed is not planted now, there could be serious food shortages in the second half of this year."

The seed was purchased locally to ensure optimum results and to help the economy recover. The ICRC and the Sierra Leone Red Cross cooperate closely in all phases of the programme, seeking to reach vulnerable families and displaced persons who have returned to work on the land in areas where there are still many security problems.

A distribution of swamp rice seed to 170,000 people in Tonkolili, Kenema, Kailahun and Pujehun districts is currently being planned and is scheduled to start in late June.

Further information: Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 22 241 438

AUSTRALIA

DISCUSSING THE FUTURE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

At the invitation of the ICRC, 21 States of the Asia-Pacific region took part in an international seminar held on 6 and 7 May in Canberra, Australia, entitled "The international criminal court, between New York and Rome". The gathering, which was organized in cooperation with the Australian government and the country's National Red Cross Society, provided many governmental experts with the opportunity of having informal talks on complex issues raised by the planned establishment of a permanent international criminal court. If such a court were to be set up by the conference scheduled to take place in Rome next month, it would have permanent jurisdiction in cases involving war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
Seminar participants included Ms Louise Arbour, prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, and judges and legal experts from China and Australia involved in the tribunals' work. During the meeting there were constructive exchanges of views between legal practitioners and scholars concerning the competence and attributions of the future court.

In addition to the host country, the following States were represented at the seminar: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Further information: Paul Bonard, ICRC Manila, tel. ++632 892 8901

**MOZAMBIQUE**

**FOR A BETTER POLICE FORCE**

From 20 to 23 April a training course on rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law for Mozambique's police and security forces took place in the capital, Maputo. The course was organized by the ICRC regional delegation in Harare, Zimbabwe, in cooperation with the Mozambique Red Cross Society. It was held in three police schools and attended by cadets and senior officers of the country's police force.

As part of the reorganization of the national police force being carried out with support from the UNDP, in 1997 the Mozambican authorities set up a major training and reorientation programme, conducted by a detachment of the Spanish Guardia civil. This year the programme should enable some 2,000 police staff to receive professional training in line with the requirements of a democratic State.

"It was a great experience", said Lt.-Col. Joao Raimundo de S. Amorim, Commander of the Military Police College of Trapiche (northern Brazil), who conducted the course on behalf of the ICRC. "It was highly motivating to see how enthusiastic the cadets were, and how keen to learn. After years of civil war everyone is eager to absorb new ideas and the principles of modern democracy. I'll be glad to come back!"

In addition to the teaching provided by Police Academy staff, the Mozambique Red Cross will, with ICRC backing, give a 15-hour course on first aid and the basic principles of international humanitarian law to the 50 classes which will receive instruction in this training centre by the end of 1998.

Further information: Frank Schmidt, ICRC Harare, tel. ++2634 790 268
Patrick L'Hôte, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2522

- Update No 98/01 on ICRC activities in Tajikistan, dated 15.05.98

For any information you may need on Thursday 21 May (national holiday) please call Philippe Lazzarini, duty press officer, on: 41 79 333 20 46 (mobile)
and the weekend of 23-24 May please call Kim Gordon-Bates, duty press officer, on: 41 79 357 50 03 (mobile)
GEORGIA/ABKHAZIA

NEW OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING

Tens of thousands of people are reported to be fleeing towards Zugdidi, in western Georgia, to escape the violent fighting that broke out on 20 May between Abkhaz forces and Georgian militias southwest of Gali, in the UN security zone bordering the cease-fire line. This is the first time since the cease-fire was signed in May 1994 that clashes have occurred on such a scale.

Two ICRC teams were rushed to the area to deliver emergency medical supplies to hospitals treating the war-wounded. The hospitals in Ochamchira and Gali, in Abkhazia, have taken in some 30 wounded since the fighting started, and the Respublika hospital in Zugdidi has admitted a total of 15, seven of whom arrived on 26 May.

The ICRC has been working in the region since 1992. It is currently directing most of its assistance to Abkhazia, where it is providing aid to 50,000 people and giving regular support to five hospitals. For four years Abkhazia has been suffering the effects of a blockade that has caused severe shortages of food and medicines. In Zugdidi, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC is organizing distributions of food and blankets for the newly displaced.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 23 07

ST PETERSBURG

COMPETITION IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

As part of its programme to promote international humanitarian law among universities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the ICRC held the second De Martens Competition in St Petersburg from 19 to 23 May. Teams of three students each, representing 13 law faculties from 11 CIS countries, strove to top each other’s knowledge of humanitarian law in a series of role-playing exercises relating to an imaginary armed conflict. The University of St Petersburg, which won the competition in 1997, was closely involved in organizing the event.

In addition, 84 teachers connected with the ICRC’s dissemination programme for secondary schools in the Russian Federation took part in a different competition, aimed at motivating teachers to use ICRC textbooks and manuals in their classes. The competitors had to devise courses using literature and teaching material on humanitarian law. The three winners were awarded the title "teachers of the year".

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
The ICRC was also invited to participate in a seminar held in Volgograd over the last few days by the Russian Federation Ministry of Home Affairs, the first time it had received such an invitation. The objective was to familiarize some 40 instructors from the main Russian police academies and those of four CIS countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) with the rules of humanitarian and human rights law. The ICRC awarded bursaries to nine participants to enable them to attend the seminar.

Alongside its work on behalf of conflict victims in the region, the ICRC has been conducting a dialogue since 1992 with all the CIS countries to remind them of their obligations as signatories to the Geneva Conventions. In order to raise awareness of humanitarian law, it has launched a series of programmes aimed at various target audiences – the army, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, universities, schools and the media.

Further information: Victoria Catliff, ICRC Moscow, tel. ++7502 220 26 16

**INDIA**

**MODEL SYLLABUS FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW COURSE**

Meeting in New Delhi on 23 and 24 May 1998 at the initiative of the ICRC regional delegation for South Asia and the Association of Indian Universities, experts in the fields of legal training and international law agreed on a model syllabus for the new course on human rights and humanitarian law being introduced into law schools throughout India.

The Bar Council of India, which lays down standards for all law schools in the country, has made this course compulsory from the forthcoming academic year onwards. The model syllabus includes a comprehensive study of international humanitarian law and will be proposed by the Association of Indian Universities to deans of law faculties, heads of law schools and all universities offering advanced courses in law. This step has given fresh impetus to ICRC efforts to promote international humanitarian law among academic circles in India.

Further information: Savita Varde-Naqvi, ICRC New Delhi, tel. ++911 462 23 38

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update No 98/01 on ICRC activities in Indonesia, dated 20.05.98

For any information you may need on the weekend of 30-31 May or on Monday 1 June 1998 (national holiday) please call the press officer on duty Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
**SUDAN**

**OPERATIONS RESUME IN THE SOUTH**

The ICRC has resumed operations in southern Sudan. On 1 and 2 June, two aircraft chartered by the organization in Khartoum and in Lokichokio, Kenya, flew delegates to Malakal, Juba, Leer and Yei to assess people's needs and to protect and assist the victims of the conflict.

On 3 June, ICRC teams went to the villages of Turalei, Malwalkon and Yirol in Bahr el Ghazal. Over the coming month, the ICRC plans to visit 15 different places all over the south, in areas held either by the government or the armed opposition. It will focus on providing support for medical facilities and evacuating the wounded, supplying drinking water and non-food aid, and protecting persons detained in connection with the conflict.

The ICRC is resuming its activities after a 19-month suspension - now that the accusations levelled against it in November 1996 have been dropped and the parties in conflict have given the necessary safety guarantees.

Further information: Pierre Ryter, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++24911 47 64 64

**GEORGIA/ABKHAZIA**

**ICRC STEPS UP ACTIVITIES**

Following violent clashes between Abkhaz troops and Georgian irregulars last week, the ICRC has stepped up its activities in western Georgia, in coordination with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Red Cross Society of Georgia. Relief for tens of thousands of newly displaced persons arriving in western Georgia and medical assistance for the war wounded had to be organized rapidly in order to respond to the most urgent needs. So far, the ICRC has distributed 7,000 family food parcels and blankets to 30,000 people in 42 villages in the Zugdidi and Tsalenjika districts.

In addition to the emergency medical supplies that the ICRC delivered to hospitals treating war-wounded in Abkhazia and western Georgia last week, the organization increased its medical aid to the polyclinic for the displaced in Zugdidi, where the number of consultations has risen as a result of the influx of newly displaced people. Together with the Georgian Ministry of Health, the ICRC is also closely monitoring the medical situation along the southern stretch of the Inguri River, where many of the displaced have sought refuge. It has already provided medicines for the Ministry's mobile medical units operating in the region, for Darcheli hospital and for health centres in Orsantia and Koki. Approximately two tonnes of medical supplies have been distributed since the fighting flared up.

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

RESPECT THE RULES!

Monrovia's main stadium, which still bears the scars of the recent seven-year conflict that claimed tens of thousands of lives and caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, was the scene of an extraordinary event on 31 May - a day which Liberian football star George O. Weah intended should long remain in the minds of his fellow Liberians, a nation of avid football fans.

Addressing an audience of 15,000 people who had come to watch a friendly match between the two best top-division Liberian football teams, Weah, who is currently with the Milan football club and in 1995 won French TV's trophy for best player of the year, said "we must all respect the rules governing behaviour in civil society - in fulfilling our individual duties as well as in assuming our collective obligations. This applies both to the rules of international humanitarian law in times of war and to those established by the leaders of the football world".

To enable the crowd better to visualize the chaos that sets in when rules are abandoned, the Liberian Red Cross Society, the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies organized an original demonstration at the beginning of the match, during which - to the audience's utter amazement - the 22 players of the "Invincible Eleven" and the "Mighty Barrolle" teams ignored all the rules of the game and the referee's instructions.

With only a few days to go before the kick-off of the football World Cup series in France, Weah and the other Liberian players wanted to show, in their own way, that there is nothing inevitable about the suffering caused by war.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

GEORGIA

ICRC TB PROGRAMME IN PRISONS UNDER WAY

The signing of a tripartite cooperation agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the ICRC on 31 May in Tbilisi, Georgia, officially launched an ICRC tuberculosis programme in Georgian prisons.

Since July 1997, the ICRC has been conducting a detailed study of the prevalence of TB and drug resistance within the context of the national TB programme in Georgian detention facilities. "The study has shown that in Georgia the risk of contracting TB in prison is about 60 times higher than outside", stated Ann Meussen, an ICRC doctor. "So far, more than 300 cases of infectious pulmonary tuberculosis have been confirmed among the detainees. Furthermore, 69% of all patients examined are resistant to at least one anti-TB drug."

Bringing new hope for the many prisoners suffering from the disease, the agreement sets out a precise plan for treatment, which will be carried out according to the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment - Short Course Strategy) method, in line with World Health Organization guidelines.
The ICRC recently organized a one-week training course in this treatment technique for health personnel and laboratory technicians in Tbilisi. "Recent experience has shown how complicated treatment can be in a detention environment", Ann Meussen added. "The task ahead is a real challenge for all those involved, but it must be dealt with as a matter of urgency."

Tuberculosis is a significant health hazard in Georgia and in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In places of detention, it is a major cause of death, as ICRC delegates have observed during their visits to monitor detention conditions. Addressing the problem in prisons is a way of preventing the rapid spread of the disease.

Further information: Steven Anderson, ICRC Tbilisi, tel. ++99 532 935 513

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org :
- Update 98/06 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 03.06.98

During the weekend of
5 - 6 June 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Rubén Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
ETHIOPIA-ERITREA
AID FOR MEDICAL FACILITIES AND THE DISPLACED

As soon as the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea erupted in early May the ICRC reminded the two governments of the rules of international humanitarian law, which they are under an obligation to respect. Eritrea is not a party to the Geneva Conventions or their Additional Protocols, but nonetheless has to comply with the customary rules applicable in the event of international armed conflict.

The ICRC has offered its support to the Red Cross Societies of both countries in their efforts to bring aid to the thousands of people who have fled their homes and the hundreds who have been wounded. With assistance from the ICRC, Red Cross workers have delivered medical supplies to hospitals and dispensaries in the border area and distributed basic necessities to the displaced. Additional consignments are on their way.

The ICRC has also offered its services to the two governments with a view to conducting visits, in accordance with its standard procedures, to persons captured in connection with the conflict.

Further information: Georges Comninos, ICRC Addis Ababa, tel. +251 1518 366

SIERRA LEONE
MAIMED CIVILIANS EVACUATED TO FREETOWN

Since 25 May ICRC delegates have evacuated from northern Sierra Leone to the capital Freetown 23 people with gunshot wounds, deep lacerations and amputated limbs requiring urgent reconstructive surgery. A helicopter was used to reach areas that are inaccessible by road owing to the poor security conditions.

Over 1,000 wounded civilians have been admitted since April to the country's medical centres, which lack the equipment needed to perform war surgery. Connaught hospital in Freetown, which does have the necessary facilities, is struggling to cope with the influx of patients. The ICRC is currently providing six hospitals and 11 clinics throughout Sierra Leone with basic medicines and surgical material, and an ICRC surgical team is being dispatched to Freetown to install a surgical unit at the Netland hospital.
The maiming of civilians in order to terrorize the population, a widespread practice during Sierra Leone's eight-year war, has reached unprecedented proportions. So far some 140 victims of mutilation have been admitted to hospitals throughout the country. It is feared that many more, unable to reach a medical centre in time, have succumbed to their wounds. Patients also report that the fate of thousands of people who fled into the bush during attacks on villages remains unknown.

Indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population amount to a grave breach of international humanitarian law. The ICRC calls upon the forces involved to put an immediate end to such acts and to show due respect for civilians.

Further information: Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 22 241 438

AFGHANISTAN
RELIEF EFFORT CONTINUES

ICRC delegates, together with representatives of other organizations working in the area, have completed a survey of all the villages that were destroyed by the recent earthquake.

To date, about a hundred of the most serious casualties have been evacuated by specially leased helicopters. Some 1,500 other people have been treated on the spot by medical teams from the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Afghan Red Crescent.

The main focus of the ICRC and UN airborne relief operations is now to distribute assistance directly to affected villages in the Badakhshan region and to continue medical evacuations when necessary. At present large stocks of jerrycans, tents, plastic sheeting, clothes, blankets, soap and food are being taken to the stricken villages. It is expected that this effort will have to be maintained for the next few weeks to ensure that the victims' basic needs are covered.

Further information: Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 76 124 2260
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2224

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND MINES BAN

At its 28th General Assembly held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 1 to 3 June the OAS adopted three resolutions directly related to humanitarian issues.

A 13-point resolution on promotion of and respect for international humanitarian law was passed, reaffirming the humanitarian commitments of the OAS and including new elements, in particular a system for reporting to the OAS Permanent Council on national measures for implementation of the law. It also encourages States to take an active part in the forthcoming Rome Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an international criminal court for the repression of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the text
reasserts OAS support for the work of the ICRC and calls for the protection of humanitarian workers in the course of their duties.

Another resolution was adopted on the ban on anti-personnel landmines and their total elimination from the American continent. Among other things, it urges member States to declare and put into effect a moratorium on the production, transfer and use of these weapons, and to adhere at the earliest possible date to the 1997 Ottawa treaty and to the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its amended Protocol II on mines. The resolution also reiterates its support for States in their mine-clearance efforts on the continent. The third resolution deals specifically with mine-clearance programmes in Central America, recalling the commitment made to the peoples of the region that it would become a zone free of anti-personnel mines by the year 2000.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2454

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/01 on ICRC activities in Georgia, dated 04.06.98
- Update 98/07 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 05.06.98

During the weekend of 13 - 14 June 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Suzanne Berger, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
ROME CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
ENCOURAGEMENT, HOPE AND SOME APPREHENSION

The Diplomatic Conference on the establishment of an international criminal court opened in Rome on 15 June. For the next five weeks, the participants' attention will focus mainly on the finalization of the future court's draft statute, which is regarded as crucial. By mid-July States should have at their disposal a treaty to be ratified at the earliest possible date.

Among other matters, the Conference will have to agree on definitions which are sufficiently broad to address the types of crime committed in today's conflicts. These definitions will relate to the court's independence vis-à-vis States and the United Nations Security Council, to its sphere of activity (what constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and genocide), and to the way in which it will function (how a case will be brought before it). The court should serve as a complement to national jurisdictions rather than being a substitute for them.

For the ICRC, the establishment of an international criminal court is of special importance. Indeed, the ICRC believes that this development will give greater weight to Article 1 common to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, whereby States undertake not only to respect the provisions of the Conventions but also to ensure respect for them. The future court will help put an end to impunity for war criminals and those responsible for acts of genocide. It could also help promote national reconciliation in countries beset by violence and have a significant deterrent effect. For these reasons, the ICRC feels that the Conference must yield tangible and credible results.

During the opening plenary, ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga drew attention to three points which the ICRC considers essential for the success of the project. He stated: "The international criminal court must have jurisdiction over crimes committed in all types of armed conflict, whether international or otherwise; it should be competent to try crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes when a State is party to the treaty; and, lastly, the court's prosecutor should be empowered to conduct investigations and institute proceedings on his or her own initiative, although in such an event the principle of complementarity must be respected".

A document detailing the ICRC's position as regards the international criminal court may be obtained from the ICRC Press Division in Geneva.

Further information: Marie-Claude Roberge, ICRC Rome, tel. ++39 6 570 52 432
Kim Gordon-Bates, ICRC Rome, tel. ++41 79 357 50 03
Béatrice Mégevand-Roggo, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 29 04
On 13 June, six days after a military rebellion broke out in Guinea-Bissau, an ICRC delegate and a delegate from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies arrived in the country's capital, Bissau.

The hostilities between government troops and rebel soldiers, involving the use of heavy weapons in urban areas, have already claimed a number of civilian victims and led to the shelling of the capital's main hospital. The delegates have begun to evaluate the needs in the city's various hospitals and have distributed medical supplies to those that are receiving the wounded. Volunteers from the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau are evacuating the wounded and burying the dead.

The delegates are also assessing the immediate needs of tens of thousands of displaced people who have fled to the south-western part of the capital to escape the fighting. Relief teams of National Society volunteers have been set up to distribute drinking water and, for the most vulnerable, rehydration salts. However, a large number of displaced people in the north-eastern part of the capital, across the front line, are without anything and cannot be reached owing to the fierce fighting.

The ICRC calls on all the parties involved to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law, in particular to distinguish between civilians and combatants and to protect and respect persons who are not or are no longer taking part in the hostilities. It also emphasizes that it is prohibited to carry out indiscriminate attacks endangering the civilian population, to use civilians as human shields and to terrorize the population. Anyone no longer taking part in the hostilities, such as wounded or sick combatants, must be collected and cared for, and those captures must be treated humanely.

The ICRC's role in this situation is to organize and coordinate the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in aid of the victims.

Further information: Jean-Jacques Tchamala, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281
ICRC delegates began visiting the Decane area of Kosovo last weekend to check the situation of a group of civilians which they had been told was being detained in the town of Decane and to observe conditions in surrounding villages.

The delegates had several meetings with the civilians concerned. While neither detained nor under house arrest, they were nevertheless in difficulties as they had been unable to leave their homes owing to poor security conditions, a predicament faced by many civilians throughout central Kosovo. Information about the group's whereabouts is being relayed to their families in northern Albania who were anxious for news of their relatives. The mission also enabled the ICRC to assess the situation of Serbs and other civilians who remain in the area.

As a result of consistent and alarming reports from refugees who left Decane in the recent exodus into northern Albania, the ICRC had tried to tour the area as a matter of urgency, but had not been allowed in the past few weeks to travel to villages around the town. It plans further visits in the coming days in order to continue its efforts to restore contact between members of separated families, to look into reports that certain individuals have been arrested and to assist those in need.

ICRC staff are meanwhile making regular visits to other parts of Kosovo to conduct relief and protection work. Delegates have started a new round of visits to persons detained in connection with the Kosovo crisis and are taking advantage of improved access on the ground to look into allegations that Serbs have been abducted.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continues to provide food and other assistance to displaced people in Kosovo. This aid is being distributed by the Yugoslav Red Cross and, in particularly unsafe areas, by the ICRC.

Further information: Gordana Milenkovic, ICRC Belgrade, tel. ++381 11 761 063
Amanda Williamson. ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2678

ERITREA-ETHIOPIA
DELEGATES VISIT CIVILIAN INTERNEES IN ETHIOPIA
AND STEP UP AID TO VICTIMS

On Saturday 20 June, the ICRC for the first time visited several hundred civilian internees being held at the Fiche camp in Ethiopia. The visit, which is still going on, is being conducted in accordance with standard working procedures. It became possible after the ICRC approached the parties to the conflict and reminded them of the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to civilian internees. The organization is continuing to request access to all prisoners of war and civilian internees.
The ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society have conducted surveys in the Tigre and Afar regions to assess the need for assistance to the wounded and the displaced.

As a result, the two organizations delivered blankets, tents, cooking utensils, jerrycans and soap to local Red Cross branches in both areas, and medical supplies to hospitals and dispensaries. The ICRC and the National Society also placed ambulances at the disposal of local Red Cross branches and provided tanker trucks to transport drinking water. Meanwhile, Ethiopian Red Cross volunteers began distributing food and registering displaced persons.

In Eritrea, the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of Eritrea have transported food supplies (high-protein biscuits, sugar and flour), blankets, cooking utensils and other relief items to regional National Society offices, together with medical supplies for first aid.

Working in close conjunction with both National Societies, the ICRC is setting up a tracing network to restore contact between members of families dispersed by the conflict and people who have been expelled.

Further information: Georges Conminos, ICRC Addis Ababa, tel. ++ 2511 518 366

GUINEA-BISSAU
HELP FOR THE DISPLACED AND HUNGRY

Since Saturday 20 June, the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau have been distributing food aid made available by the United Nations' World Food Programme to displaced people in the capital Bissau.

Cooking oil, rice and other cereals have been provided to people who had sought refuge in the N'dame and Toquir mission compounds and in the grounds of the Simao-Mendes hospital, as well as to people who had fled the fighting towards the town of Prabis, to the south-west of Bissau. In all, over 10,000 people have received almost 50 tonnes of food from volunteers of the Guinea-Bissau Red Cross, which is being supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The vast majority of those displaced from Bissau have fled east and are now cut off from aid sources by the front line separating them from the capital. Three ICRC staff members (a delegate, a health-care specialist and a water and sanitation engineer) have therefore set off for the area concerned from Conakry, capital of the neighbouring Republic of Guinea.

Two more ICRC delegates have left Dakar for Bissau to reinforce the team already on the spot.

Further information: Jean-Jacques Tchamala, ICRC Dakar, tel.: ++ 221 8 241 293
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++ 41 22 730 22 81
The ICRC yesterday published its third series of photos of very young unaccompanied children in an attempt to trace their families. The series consists of 1,000 photos divided into two booklets. Two thousand five hundred copies of each have been printed and will be distributed throughout Rwanda to local authorities, health-care facilities, churches and organizations involved in tracing and reuniting separated families.

Jean Wenker is coordinator of the ICRC's tracing operation in Rwanda. He explained that anyone looking at the photos who sees a child he believes is related to him is asked to contact the nearest ICRC office and to supply it with details about the child's physical characteristics and habits. This information is then compared with the data already recorded by the staff of organizations in contact with the child. This is the first stage in checking the child's identity. If the information matches, the relatives go to the centre where the child they identified in the album is living. "They often recognize their child among all the others at the centre, which eliminates any remaining doubt", says Wenker. "There are also cases in which the parents of one child recognize another one belonging to a relative, a friend or a neighbour. So the programme works in an indirect as well as a direct fashion."

The programme, entitled "Do you know this child?", began in May 1997 with the publication of the first booklet of 242 photos, each showing a child too young to provide the information needed to find his family. A second booklet – this time with 440 photos – followed in November. So far, the programme has made it possible to reunite 419 young children with members of their families. Of these, 223 had had their photos published in one of the first two booklets. The remaining 196 were found by indirect means, as described above.

Further information: Andrew MacLeod, ICRC Kigali, tel. +250 72 781
Last weekend an ICRC team managed to reach the village of Kijevo, in central Kosovo, where over 400 people – around 100 local and displaced Serb families, but also some ethnic Albanian and Romany families – have been cut off from the outside world for the past two months owing to the fighting between the Kosovo Liberation Army and government security forces.

The main aim of the visit was to assess the needs of the civilian population in terms of protection and material assistance. Although food is available, medicines are scarce and, with the electricity supply having been cut three weeks ago, the water pumps are no longer functioning. The survival of the crops is also a concern in Kijevo and other areas of Kosovo where the fighting has made it unsafe for villagers to go into the fields.

The delegates delivered individual food parcels, hygiene items, baby kits, blankets, candles and jerrycans to the most vulnerable people, including displaced families. The villagers welcomed not only the assistance but also the very presence of the ICRC, the only humanitarian organization to have reached Kijevo so far.

Further trips are planned in the coming days to Kijevo and other parts of Kosovo where isolated groups of civilians are living in precarious humanitarian and security conditions.

Further information: Gordana Milenkovic, ICRC Belgrade. tel. ++381 11 761 063
Amanda Williamson, ICRC Geneva. tel. ++41 22 730 2678

SIERRA LEONE

MAIMED CIVILIANS RECEIVE SURGICAL TREATMENT IN FREE TOWN

The 60-bed Netland hospital, transformed by the ICRC into a reconstructive surgery facility, opened its doors on 26 June. Seven war-wounded patients were operated on within the following three days.

"The ICRC set up the hospital to provide surgical care and rehabilitation for civilians who have sustained war injuries and require primary or secondary surgery or specialized care to recover the use of their limbs", said Stephanie O'Connor, Netland's head nurse. The first patients admitted were transferred from Connaught hospital, previously the only hospital providing war surgery. While arrangements were being made for patients to be transferred from hospitals in other parts of the country.
The Sierra Leone Red Cross blood bank is supplying blood for the hospital. An independent physiotherapy centre with a capacity of 120 patients is being set up and the first cases should be admitted in the beginning of July. Medical personnel will also be trained in the principles of war surgery.

The ICRC is currently providing five hospitals and 20 clinics countrywide with basic medicines. It is also carrying out water and sanitation work in the Makeni, Port Loko and Kenema areas involving the chlorination of over 6,000 wells and the digging of 60 new ones in the north in cooperation with the National Society and the Ministry of Health.

Other activities include regular visits to people held in seven places of detention throughout the country. The exchange of Red Cross messages both between families separated by the conflict and between detainees and their families has expanded to reach an average of 360 messages a week.

A distribution of upland and swamp rice seed to 10,000 farming families in the Tonkolili and Kenema districts has just been completed in cooperation with the Sierra Leone Red Cross, and a distribution of swamp rice seed to 7,651 farming families in the Pujehun district is currently under way.

Further information: Aleksandra Matijevic, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 22 24 14 38

GUINEA-BISSAU

ASSISTING THE DISPLACED AND ASSESSING NEEDS

During the last two weeks, over 120 tonnes of food have been distributed to some 35,000 displaced persons in and around Bissau by the ICRC and the Guinea-Bissau Red Cross, which is receiving support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The food (rice, cooking oil and canned beef) was provided by the United Nations World Food Programme.

If a truce can be negotiated, a team of Red Cross volunteers stands ready to bury the dead in the capital's northern districts, where the heaviest fighting took place. Meanwhile, the ICRC and the National Society have installed 5,000-litre tanks of drinking water for the displaced in three locations in the outskirts of the city.

The three ICRC delegates who entered Guinea-Bissau last week from the neighbouring Republic of Guinea are continuing to assess the situation in the northern, central and southern parts of the country. For the time being the displaced appear to have found refuge among the local population, but their needs are great.
The most urgent priorities are to ensure access to drinking water, especially in the urban areas, provide hospitals and dispensaries with medical supplies and distribute food to the displaced, who are currently dependent on the meagre resources of the local population and whose situation could rapidly deteriorate if the conflict drags on.

National Society volunteers and an ICRC delegate sent in from Dakar are also carrying out a survey of the situation in the Bissagos Islands, off the coast of Bissau.

Further information: Jean-Jacques Tshamala, ICRC Dakar, tel. +221 8 241 293

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

INAUGURATION OF LIMB-FITTING WORKSHOP IN KINSHASA

The ICRC and the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo officially inaugurated the Kalembe-Lembe limb-fitting workshop in Kinshasa on 27 June following the signing, on 28 March, of a cooperation agreement between the two organizations.

In addition to supplying technical assistance and rehabilitating the existing buildings, the ICRC sent François Blaise, an experienced prosthetic technician, to lend a hand. Mr Blaise, who will work together with a team of technicians and craftsmen from the National Society, has already carried out ICRC assignments in Angola, Kenya, southern Sudan and Cambodia. The new workshop will produce artificial limbs and orthopaedic appliances made of polypropylene, a material which has the advantage of being inexpensive and light.

Accidents and anti-personnel mines account for most amputations performed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since the workshop opened on 26 May, consultations have been given to 35 soldiers and dozens of civilians. "The limb I'm wearing now is made of wood and weighs nearly three kilos, which makes it very difficult for me to move about", said Rémy Ngamutala, who was the victim of an accident in Kinshasa in 1989 and is among those who will soon be fitted with new limbs at the Red Cross workshop.

According to François Blaise, there is plenty to be done: "As soon as the workshop opened, the news spread like wildfire. We already have a list of over 200 people who are to be given consultations and artificial limbs by the end of the year."

Further information: France Hurtubise, CICR Kinshasa, tel. ++ 243 12 34 191

During the weekend of
4-5 July 1998, for all information
please call the press officer on duty
Corinne Adam, on (mobile) 41 79
357 50 03
GUINEA-BISSAU

ICRC OFFICE SET UP IN BAFATA

Last week the ICRC opened an office in Bafatá, the main city in eastern Guinea-Bissau. The permanent presence of ICRC delegates there will make it easier to assess the situation of displaced persons throughout the country. Since the front line passes north of Bissau, it remains difficult to use the capital as a base for action.

The surveys carried out in the last two weeks will now make it possible to launch assistance operations from Bafatá to provide the population with drinking water, food and medical supplies. In the capital, Guinea-Bissau Red Cross volunteers are continuing to distribute food put at the ICRC's disposal by the World Food Programme.

Meanwhile, the ICRC is busy setting up a network for collecting and distributing Red Cross messages so that the inhabitants of Guinea-Bissau can remain in touch with their relatives abroad via various National Societies throughout the world.

Further information: Jean-Jacques Tshamala, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293

ETHIOPIA/ERITREA

ICRC DELEGATES VISIT PRISONERS OF WAR AND PROVIDE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CONFLICT VICTIMS

The ICRC carried out two visits to the 163 prisoners of war being held in Fiche camp, the first on 27 June and the second on 2 July. All of these prisoners have now been registered.

On 26 June a visit was also made to the civilian internees being held in Fiche in order to register those who had arrived since the ICRC first went to the camp on 20 June. At the end of the second visit a total of 664 civilian internees had been registered.

All the visits were conducted in accordance with the ICRC's standard working procedures and will be repeated on a regular basis.

The civilian internees and prisoners of war who had not yet been in contact with their families wrote Red Cross messages which will be distributed via the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea and other National Societies.
In close conjunction with the Tigray branch of the Ethiopian Red Cross and the regional health authorities, the ICRC furnished additional medical supplies to be distributed to hospitals and other medical facilities in the northern Tigray region of the country.

In Eritrea, the National Society is continuing to provide medical facilities with ambulances and volunteers near potential conflict areas along the Ethiopian border. Such action has proved helpful in the past, particularly when fighting broke out near the town of Zalambessa and in the south-eastern border area. Local Red Cross branches are being regularly resupplied with first-aid equipment and other essential non-food items. At the same time, in cooperation with local authorities, the Eritrean Red Cross is continuing to assess the situation of displaced persons and other civilians affected by the conflict.

As part of their tracing activities, the ICRC and the Eritrean Red Cross have so far collected 16 Red Cross messages from the families of young men who were studying in Ethiopia under a bilateral exchange programme. Meanwhile, the ICRC is keeping up its dialogue with the authorities in Asmara concerning the protection of persons wounded or captured during the recent fighting.

Further information: Georges Comninos. ICRC Addis Ababa, tel. ++ 2511 518 366

KENYA

DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN RECEIVE ASSISTANCE IN RIFT VALLEY

This week the Red Cross completed relief distributions to over 5,000 displaced persons in Kenya's Rift Valley, most of them women and children.

It was the second round of distributions for thousands of uprooted Kenyans in the Nakuru and Laikipia districts. With support from the ICRC, the Kenya Red Cross Society had already given them emergency aid in February and March and begun to provide longer-term assistance in May.

At present calm has returned to Laikipia, but tension is still rife in some areas of Nakuru and many people are reluctant to return to their homes.

"This time the violence was worse. We will never go back. During the last troubles in 1992 none of us were killed. This time many were", said Jennifer, a 45-year-old mother of nine who lives on a dusty patch of land in one of the camps outside Nakuru.

Living conditions in these camps have been deteriorating and inadequate sanitation and overcrowding pose a constant threat of infectious diseases. "The Red Cross has already built a number of pit latrines and is handing out soap and disinfectant as well as plastic sheeting and sleeping mats for the camp population", said Emmanuel Campbell. ICRC delegate in charge of cooperation with the National Society. In Laikipia, construction materials will be provided for the homeless.
Those receiving assistance are victims of the violent clashes that broke out in the Rift Valley in mid-January, leaving thousands of people displaced. The June distribution provided a total of 3,980 people in Nakuru with maize, beans, edible oil and blankets, while in Laikipia 1,172 families were given hoes and 30 others blankets.

Further information: Nina Galbe and Christine Thuranira. ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

INTERNET
ICRC OPENS WEBSITE IN SPANISH

The ICRC opened a Spanish version of its Website on the Internet on 7 July. The site may be accessed by clicking on "Español" from:

http://www.icrc.org or http://www.cicr.org

Like its English and French counterparts, the Spanish version provides information on a wide range of topics relating to conflict and conflict victims and on the role, activities and concerns of the ICRC.

The site is divided into easily identifiable sections allowing users to navigate from the latest news to information on ICRC operations in various countries and specific issues such as landmines. It also contains the texts of the main treaties of international humanitarian law and related commentaries. A search facility is available, together with the means to forward comments (Guest Book) and questions (webmaster@icrc.org) to the ICRC.

The Spanish version contains a separate section on Latin America with an overview of ICRC activities in the region, a calendar of seminars and courses, and articles by well-known specialists on international humanitarian law and humanitarian action. It also provides links to other Spanish-language sites.

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update No 98/03 on ICRC activities in Guinea-Bissau, dated 6.07.98

During the weekend of 11-12 July 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Amanda Williamson, on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
In Wau, where the situation is extremely alarming, the ICRC is supporting the Sudanese Red Crescent's supplementary feeding centre. More than 700 children are registered at the centre, where they are receiving intensive food assistance on a daily basis. Between 50 and 80 new children arrive there each day.

Since 13 July, the centre has been giving cooked meals to the parents and elder siblings who accompany the children to the centre and who are also in desperate need of food. In most cases the children are brought to the centre by young family members since their parents are busy queuing up for food at distribution points.

Some 47,000 newcomers have been registered by the local authorities in Wau since May, most of them too weak to continue foraging for something to eat in their villages. The daily influx is between 1,000 and 2,000 people. More than two thirds of them come from the surrounding countryside, where there is no food and the fighting and delayed rains make it impossible to cultivate the land. The other third are people who fled the town during a battle that took place there last January and are now returning to their homes.

The situation is worsening day by day, with the newcomers stretching the already scarce shelter and sanitation resources. The ICRC will send a nutritionist and a water and sanitation engineer to Wau by the end of the week to lend a hand.

This week, together with Save the Children Fund, the ICRC and the Sudanese Red Crescent plan to distribute essential non-food relief items (cooking utensils, blankets, water containers, mosquito nets, soap and kanga - fabric for clothing) to some 5,000 households. In anticipation of new arrivals, the ICRC is currently building up enough stocks of these items to meet the needs of another 5,000 households.

In the Malwal Kon region, where conditions are precarious, planting is still possible owing to the delay in the rains. Between 8 and 10 July, the ICRC took advantage of the situation to distribute 24 tonnes of sorghum seed to 16,750 households in five payams (communities) and a further four tonnes of seed to 3,600 households of internally displaced persons gathered in four locations where they have access to patches of cultivable land. In all, around 100,000 people should thus be able to harvest their own food in a few months' time.

Further information: Pierre Ryter, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 22 81
**NIGERIA**

**RED CROSS VOLUNTEERS HELP RIOT VICTIMS**

Only a few hours after violent riots erupted in the major urban areas of south-western Nigeria following the death of opposition leader Chief Moshood Abiola on 7 July, the Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan branches of the Nigerian Red Cross Society mobilized over 350 volunteers to help deal with the crisis.

In the Lagos metropolitan area, over 150 volunteers manned some 40 first-aid posts. The ICRC regional delegation provided additional vehicles, fuel, telecommunications equipment and first-aid material for the National Society, which placed senior staff and three vehicles at the disposal of its branch offices.

Between 8 and 11 July Nigerian Red Cross teams assisted over 700 riot victims (225 in Lagos, 423 in Abeokuta and 68 in Ibadan). On 14 July, with the backing of the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the National Society launched a support programme in five south-western urban areas for some 5,000 internally displaced persons from minority communities who had lost their belongings in the disturbances.

The ICRC regional delegation in Lagos has been supporting the National Society's emergency-preparedness activities since 1988 by refurbishing disaster-intervention vehicles, providing telecommunications equipment and first-aid supplies and training volunteers.

Further information: Walter Stocker, ICRC Lagos, tel. ++2341 269 18 81

**TAJIKISTAN**

**FROM FOOD DISTRIBUTION TO FOOD PRODUCTION**

A new ICRC assistance programme designed to help the Tajik prison administration start producing food for detainees is about to yield its first crops. Several plots of land covering a total area of approximately 154 hectares have been sown with potatoes, wheat and beans to supply the kitchens of 14 government-run prisons. Seed, fertilizers and various agricultural supplies were provided by the ICRC. Both the prison authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture welcomed this programme, which will allow them to grow enough food for the detainees.

Last week delegates proceeded with the final food distributions in prisons, putting an end to the nutritional assistance programme which the ICRC had launched in the summer of 1996 to reduce the alarming death rate among the 7,000 detainees who are languishing in Tajik jails. Although the programme achieved its aim, surveys show that the overall situation remains far from satisfactory. Each month the ICRC distributed about 120 tonnes of food for the detainees. However, in several prisons government supplies were reduced and the ICRC programme was used to replace ordinary rations.
While delegates can deliver assistance, they have so far been unable to hold private meetings with persons detained as a result of the 1992 internal conflict. Such meetings are standard ICRC practice.

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

IRU/ICRC PHOTO COMPETITION

The International Road Transport Union (IRU), which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, awarded its 1998 Grand Prix d'Honneur to the ICRC in recognition of the professionalism and commitment of its drivers. In association with the ICRC, the IRU has now launched a photo competition entitled "Driving together - 50 years of road transport serving mankind". The competition comprises three categories (humanitarian, historical and modern) and is open to everyone except for the staff members of the two organizations. Participation in more than one category is allowed. In the humanitarian category, entries must show how transport serves people in countries beset by conflict or other crises. They do not necessarily have to deal with the Red Cross: any photo having to do with humanitarian action or a humanitarian organization will be taken into consideration.

Entries should be sent before 31 August 1998 to the address given below. They may also be sent to an ICRC field delegation or to the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society of the country concerned. The winners will be chosen by a jury of experts and a prize of 5,000 Swiss francs will be awarded in each category. The best pictures will be displayed in an exhibition to be held at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum starting 18 November 1998.

For further information and entry forms please contact Tony Burgener, REX/PRO, ICRC, 19 avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland (tel. ++4122 730 23 84; fax ++4122 730 28 99; e-mail: aburgener@icrc.org).

During the weekend of
18 - 19 July 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Ruben Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
AFGHANISTAN

140 DETAINEES RELEASED UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

On 21 July 140 detainees were released in Afghanistan under the auspices of the ICRC. A team of ICRC delegates accompanied by representatives of the Taliban authorities and Commander Massoud's Northern Coalition went to the no-man's-land north of Kabul to take part in the operation. Half of the detainees were being held by the Taliban authorities in Kandahar and the other half by the authorities of the Northern Coalition in Panshir.

The ICRC has been working in Afghanistan since 1980 and conducts regular visits throughout the country to people detained by all the parties to the conflict.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 22 24

ICRC SHOCKED BY MURDER OF FOUR UN STAFF MEMBERS IN TAJIKISTAN

Extremely shocked by the murder of four UN staff members by unknown individuals who ambushed them on 20 July as they were driving from Tavildara to the Garm valley, in central Tajikistan, the ICRC wishes to extend its deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the victims and to their colleagues at the UN. The ICRC strongly condemns this act of cold-blooded murder.

Following this tragic incident, the ICRC decided to suspend its activities in the Garm and Tavildara area until further notice and called its staff back to Dushanbe.

Joining the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in a gesture of solidarity with the colleagues and friends of the victims, the ICRC delegation in Dushanbe has instructed its staff to work exclusively on the premises of its office until 24 July.
GUINEA-BISSAU
ICRC RENEWS ITS APPEAL

Following increased exchanges of artillery fire in the capital city of Bissau from 15 to 17 July, the ICRC once again called on all the parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law, urging them to distinguish between civilians and combatants and take every measure to ensure that the population is not exposed to the dangers resulting from military operations. Meanwhile, the fighting has slowed down the humanitarian assistance operations which ICRC delegates are carrying out with the help of volunteers from the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau.

The shelling in Bissau claimed a number of civilian victims as some people had taken advantage of a temporary lull in the fighting to attempt to return to their homes, which they had fled when the fighting broke out on 7 June. Among other things destroyed in the artillery fire was the marketplace, where people had begun to buy and sell goods again. These events have reversed the flow of people back to the capital, and the displaced are once again seeking refuge on the city outskirts.

In mid-July, in Bafatá, the country's second largest city, ICRC delegates took delivery of two convoys of food sent by the World Food Programme via the Republic of Guinea. Distributions were carried out by local Red Cross volunteers and by religious missions and other organizations present on the spot. In all, some 56 tonnes of grain, oil, salt and sugar were handed out to over 4,000 displaced persons in the Mansoa area and to hospital patients.

Further information: Gilbert Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 24 12 93

RUSSIAN FEDERATION / NORTHERN CAUCASUS
INTERNAL CLASHES IN CHECHNYA

Many people were reportedly killed and wounded in the clashes that pitted Chechen forces against an armed fundamentalist faction on 14 and 15 July in Gudermes. On 17 July the ICRC delegation in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria) arranged for emergency medical supplies to be sent to Chechnya. Local ICRC staff in Grozny later distributed these supplies to five hospitals in Argun, Grozny, Gudermes, Kurt Chaloi and Urus Martan that had taken in people wounded during the clashes. The assistance delivered should cover the medical needs of about 60 people.

Since late 1996, for security reasons, the ICRC has been using Nalchik as the base for its operations in Chechnya, Daghestan and Ingushetia. Local ICRC and Russian Red Cross staff members are in charge of carrying out ICRC projects on the spot.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva: ++ 4122 730 22 24

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
UPDATED LIST OF MISSING PERSONS

The fourth edition of the list of persons reported missing in Bosnia-Herzegovina was released in Sarajevo this week as part of the ICRC's ongoing efforts to tackle a crucial humanitarian problem that continues to bring untold suffering to thousands of families throughout the country.
The list, also referred to as the "book of missing persons", contains the most recent information (personal details and date and place of disappearance) on 18,014 people still unaccounted for in connection with the war. The latest edition also includes the names of people who have been reported dead but whose families are still waiting to recover their bodies so that they can be given a decent burial.

The book will be distributed widely throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina in police stations, municipal buildings, medical facilities and other places in an effort to encourage people to come forth with any information that might help elucidate the fate of those reported missing and could be passed on to their families. It will also be sent to more than 30 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in countries where refugees have settled.

The ICRC believes that it is primarily up to the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina to persuade people to provide it with information that could help ease the anguish felt by the families of missing persons. These families cannot recover their peace of mind until they learn what has become of their relatives and anyone who can help is requested to come forward for their sake.

The updated list of missing persons is posted on the ICRC's public server on the Internet under the heading "Special Web Operation: Unaccounted for in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Website address: http://www.icrc.org).

Further information: Jon-Hans Coetzer, ICRC Sarajevo, tel. ++387 71 652 407

SENEGAL

FOOD AID FOR DISPLACED PERSONS AND VISITS TO DETAINEES IN CASAMANCE

On 22 July, in cooperation with the Senegalese Red Cross, the ICRC began a fourth series of food distributions (140 tonnes) for 20,000 displaced persons in the Ziguinchor area, in Casamance (southern Senegal). Over the past 11 months these people, who have been registered by the National Society, have fled their homes to escape from the fighting between the Senegalese armed forces and rebels from the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance.

Since 13 July an ICRC doctor and a delegate have been conducting a new round of visits to people arrested in connection with the events in Casamance. The team has already seen detainees in the Dakar prison and is currently visiting the places of detention situated in the south of the country, in Bignona, Kolda and Ziguinchor. In accordance with the ICRC's standard working procedures, the team is holding private interviews with detainees to find out about their living conditions and the treatment they receive. In Senegal, the ICRC has been conducting regular visits to detainees who come under its mandate since 1996.

Further information: Gilbert Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++ 221 8 24 12 93

During the weekend of 25 - 26 July 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA/KOSOVO

ICRC AID FOR CONFLICT VICTIMS

A dozen ICRC delegates based in Pristina travel every day to villages in the central regions of Kosovo hard hit by the recent clashes. They have observed that large numbers of civilians are having to abandon their homes to seek a safer haven. Those unable to leave take refuge in cellars or makeshift shelters.

During the past week the ICRC has distributed 15 tonnes of aid (maize flour, food parcels and hygiene items) to over 20,000 displaced people who fled from Orahovac and gathered in the village of Malishevo. Medical supplies have also been distributed to various hospitals. Because of the proximity of the fighting, most of the displaced are now moving on towards Prizren, further south.

Delegates also went several times to Orahovac to assess the situation and keep in touch with the traumatized civilians stranded there.

The ICRC is particularly concerned about the plight of persons arrested, abducted or separated from their relatives by the events, and is doing its utmost to locate them rapidly and visit them. On 22 July delegates took charge of 35 released Serb civilians and transported them to Pristina.

Thousands of other people who have been displaced to Montenegro or taken refuge in Albania are also receiving assistance from the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, through the volunteers of the National Societies concerned. The ICRC has collected several hundred family messages from these people and forwarded them to members of their families, which have been dispersed by the fighting raging in Kosovo.

Further information: Amanda Williamson, tel. ++4122 730 2628

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CHECHNYA

INAUGURATION OF GROZNY BLOOD BANK

The Grozny blood bank was inaugurated on 21 July in the presence of the Vice Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic, the Ministers of Health and Education, a parliamentary representative and two ICRC delegates.

The blood bank, which had served neighbouring Ingushetia as well as Chechnya, was destroyed during the fighting that devastated the city in 1996. The entire project to rebuild the premises and bring the new facility into operation was funded by the ICRC and supervised on the spot by its locally-recruited staff.

Despite the scaling down of its activities and the withdrawal of its delegates to Nalchik following the murder of six staff members at Novye Atagi in December 1996, the ICRC has maintained its action for victims of the Chechen conflict.

The ICRC currently has 11 delegates and about a hundred local staff in the northern Caucasus region, working out of offices in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria), Grozny (Chechnya), Khasavyurt (Dagestan), Nazran (Ingushetia), Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) and, just recently, Stavropol (Stavropol kraj).

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2224
SIERRA LEONE

ICRC PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE FOR WAR VICTIMS OPENS IN FREETOWN

A former hotel for tourists on the outskirts of Freetown, the Lakka Cotton Club, has been turned into a 120-bed ICRC physiotherapy centre where the war-wounded and maimed civilians can continue to receive post-operative treatment.

On 14 July the first 10 patients were transferred to the centre from the clinic at the Waterloo camp, on the Freetown peninsula, where they had been recovering from surgery. Some 7,000 displaced persons have taken refuge in the camp.

In the following days more patients were transferred to the centre from the ICRC surgical hospital in Freetown. Over half of the 60 beds in this hospital, where reconstructive surgery has been performed since 26 June, have already been filled. Most of the hospital's 34 inpatients were evacuated from areas in the north and east of the country, where medical facilities lack the equipment and skills to perform complicated war surgery.

Even experienced medical personnel were shocked when they saw the mutilation suffered by civilians arriving in Freetown. "Once these people have undergone surgery, we have to do our utmost to facilitate their reintegration into their communities", said Margret Staff, head nurse at the ICRC surgical hospital. "Post-operative rehabilitation is an essential step."

War surgery is an area in which the ICRC has gained valuable experience during the many years it has been working in conflict situations. On 16 June it held a seminar for 11 doctors from Freetown, who were given advice on the management of war wounds and information on Red Cross activities. Further seminars are being planned for the medical staff of up-country hospitals receiving ICRC support.

Further information: Jean-Luc Metzker, ICRC Freetown, tel. ++232 22 24 14 38

BRAZIL

ICRC ACTIVITIES ON THE AIR

The ICRC regional delegation in Brasilia recently reached agreement with the country's Cadena Católica de Radio (Catholic radio network) on a weekly broadcast of news about ICRC activities around the world. The network has 180 transmitters in 23 of Brazil's 26 states and one in the Federal District, Brasilia.

The information furnished by delegation staff is sent to the network's headquarters in the Goiás state capital, Goiania, and broadcast on Thursdays during the 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. news. Twenty-two other Brazilian radio stations also broadcast short ICRC news items and programmes on current events in the humanitarian sphere.

Edmilson Santos, news chief of the Cadena Católica de Radio, commented: "Thanks to the input we receive from the ICRC delegation we can offer our listeners a broader picture of the international scene, since we cover conflicts of which the Brazilian public has little or no knowledge". He added that for Brazil's 160 million inhabitants radio is the main source of information between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., "after which the population's attention is focused on the TV".

Further information: Ivan Godoy, ICRC Brasilia, tel. ++5561 248 02 50
                  Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2454

KENYA

RED CROSS WATER-SUPPLY PROJECTS ALSO REDUCE TENSION

This week the Red Cross set up projects in Kenya to bring clean water to more than 30,000 families while at the same time reducing tension between farming and pastoral communities.

When trouble erupted in the Rift Valley in January this year the ICRC, together with the Kenya Red Cross Society, launched an emergency operation to aid over 15,000 displaced victims of violence. The work was carried out in close cooperation with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Catholic Diocese of the region.
It soon became evident that competition for limited water resources was straining relations between farming and pastoral communities. One of many places in which water shortages had become a serious and recurring problem was the Samaki Dam area in El Moran, where Kikuyu farmers were ousted by Samburu herdsmen and lives were lost in the process.

One day in July, a band of red-clad Samburu were walking along the path bordering the dam, watching over their cattle which were quenching their thirst in the emerald green water. They agreed on one thing with the farmers in El Moran town, a small, dusty outpost of wooden shacks in this arid area where water means life: "There have to be two water sources: one for the animals and one for the people. We hope the Red Cross can help".

Pascal Jansen, ICRC water and sanitation coordinator in Kenya, said: "It is simply not enough to give emergency aid such as food and blankets to displaced people when we know that separate water sources can significantly reduce tension between the two communities and prevent displacement at the outset".

The ICRC, in cooperation with the Kenya Red Cross, decided to combine borehole construction and dam rehabilitation programmes in Nakuru and Laikipia districts in Rift Valley province. The boreholes will provide clean water for 8,000 farming families, while the dams will serve 22,750 pastoral families and their 30,000 animals.

Further information: Nina Galbe, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

AZERBAIJAN

BETTER CONDITIONS FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

At the beginning of 1998, the ICRC launched a programme in four front-line districts of northern Azerbaijan (Kazakh, Agstafa, Tovuz and Gadabav) to carry out basic repairs on schools damaged by fighting during the active period of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. Owing to the decline in the economy, the country lacks the resources needed for investment in projects to renovate battle-scarred infrastructure.

During the first phase six schools were covered by the ICRC programme, which is aimed at restoring acceptable conditions for educational activities, even during the cold winter months. Once repairs to roofs, floors, doors and windows were completed, the ICRC provided furniture, blackboards and stoves.

The second phase of the programme started in May and included eight more schools in the region. Construction work goes faster during the summer months and holidays and everything should be ready in time for the children to go back to school in September.

Villagers and local authorities have been closely associated with each project. The work has been carried out by local craftsmen in accordance with their usual standards so as not to create differences with other schools not covered by the programme.

Last year 12 schools were rehabilitated under a similar project in Fizuli district south of Nagorny Karabakh.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2224

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/09 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 28.07.98

During the weekend of 1 - 2 August 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Amanda Williamson, on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
Almost 1,000 children are currently under the care of the feeding centre being run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Sudanese Red Crescent in the town of Wau, in one of the areas suffering most from the famine racking southern Sudan. The 27 Red Crescent volunteers working at the centre prepare thousands of meals a day on the cooking fires: as many as four a day for the most seriously affected children and one for each of the individual family members who accompany some of them.

About half of the children registered at the feeding centre are classified as severely malnourished, their bones clearly visible beneath their skin. The centre includes a medical dispensary as many of the children are also ill with malaria, intestinal problems and eye infections.

Those arriving in recent days are in worse condition than people who reached Wau in previous weeks. "They have been travelling from further and further away", explains Agnes Dhur, the ICRC nutritionist there. "These are people who tried to survive at home, with what little they had, for longer periods of time."

"The situation is beyond desperate", says nurse Elisabeth Mouton, who has been working at the feeding centre for three weeks. "Every day we receive orphans, children whose parents have died along the way. Many have walked for five or six days to reach Wau. They are finding shelter where they can, in abandoned buildings and ruins scattered around the town."

In the town's streets people wait to be taken in by one of the aid organizations present. Many lie on the ground, no longer able to sit up. ICRC nurse Corrie Baas and her 12-year-old assistant Joseph carry around a bucket of water mixed with oral rehydration solution, giving a mugful to the most desperate. "I know I can't save them all", she says. "But at least I can provide some comfort. No matter how obviously hopeless a case is, you can't simply walk past." Across the road from the feeding centre, an open field is quickly filling with graves.

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Khartoum, ++ 249 11 476 464
Nina Galbe, ICRC Nairobi, ++ 254 2 723 963 / 4 / 5
Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, ++ 41 22 730 22 81
YUGOSLAVIA / KOSOVO

INCREASING ALARM AT SCALE OF KOSOVO CRISIS

The flight of tens of thousands of people from their homes in central Kosovo during the most recent operations by Serbian forces has resulted in a degree of desperation unprecedented since the crisis there began.

ICRC teams travelling in central Kosovo have been shocked to find groups of thousands of people living in appalling conditions – surviving in the open air under makeshift shelters and in urgent need of food and medicine. In the searing heat of summer, drinking water is in especially short supply, particularly for vulnerable groups like children and old people. The risk of epidemics is on the rise. Emergency stocks of food, medicines and hygienic supplies have already started to be provided and deliveries of water are being organized as quickly as possible.

On Tuesday, delegates visited Mitrovica and surrounding towns where they encountered thousands of families including elderly people and young children fleeing from the ongoing fighting in the Drenica area. Many were travelling in large tractor convoys in a state of extreme shock and trauma.

ICRC staff have gone this week to Prizren, Mamusa and the Mount Berisha range to continue bringing urgent aid to those who fled Malisevo last week. Delegates saw houses either burning or already burnt to the ground.

Well over 100,000 people have fled their homes since the crisis in Kosovo began. The swiftly evolving situation and recent major population movements make it difficult to accurately assess the numbers of displaced, but the ICRC will nevertheless attempt to do so in the coming days while acting to meet immediate needs.

In order to respond to the growing crisis, the ICRC is reinforcing its personnel and replenishing its stocks in the region.

Further information: Amanda Williamson, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2678
ICRC Belgrade, tel. ++381 11 761 063

AFGHANISTAN

FOREIGN AID WORKERS LEAVE MAZAR-I-SHARIF

In the wake of the fighting that has raged near Mazar-i-Sharif between forces of the Taliban and the northern alliance, the ICRC took action on 4 August to evacuate the eight expatriate staff members of non-international organizations who still remained in Mazar-i-Sharif. As a result, there no longer remain any non-Afghan humanitarian workers in the northern Afghan city.
Since the heavy fighting of last March, no ICRC delegates have been based in Mazar-i-Sharif. The sub-delegation remains open, however, and delegates have been going there on ad hoc missions to carry out the organization's work in the area with the help of 90 local Afghan employees. The expatriates themselves, however, never go beyond the city limits. Items needed for the treatment of casualties have in recent days been supplied to the military hospital there.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++ 41 22 730 22 24

PERU

AID FOR DETAINEES BEING HELD AT HIGH-ALTITUDE PRISON

Owing to the facility's extreme isolation, the ICRC has from time to time been supplying aid to the high-security Challapalca prison in the Peruvian department of Tacna. In addition to distributing blankets and recreational material, the ICRC has provided financial assistance to enable families of the some 100 penal-law detainees held there to travel to the prison, which is situated at an elevation of over 5,000 metres.

In the second quarter of 1998, the ICRC continued its protection work in behalf of security detainees in Peru. In all, 1,148 such detainees were visited in 22 places, including an institution for minors in Lima and a new prison for women in Junin department.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++41 22 730 22 81
Jean-Luc Noverraz, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++41 22 730 29 67

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/06 on the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in response to the crisis in Kosovo, dated 30.07.98

During the weekend of 8 - 9 August 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Béatricie Mégevand-Roggo, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 70
SOUTHERN SUDAN

ICRC STEPS UP RELIEF ACTIVITIES FOR FAMINE VICTIMS

The ICRC this week increased its presence in the town of Wau, in southern Sudan, from two to six expatriates. In addition to supporting the Sudanese Red Crescent feeding centre for malnourished children that has been operating for about three months, the ICRC has now opened a similar facility for malnourished adults. The new centre is currently able to cover the needs of up to 1,000 persons per day, and will gradually increase its capacity. To improve the local water and sanitation system in Wau, the ICRC has dispatched two water and sanitation engineers to the town.

Since the beginning of this week, another feeding centre, in Tonj, has been providing cooked meals for 600 children and up to 1,000 adults suffering from malnutrition.

Additional medical staff have arrived in Juba to provide surgical services at the Juba Teaching Hospital and to support three primary health-care clinics. This will complement the surgical services provided by the ICRC’s 500-bed hospital in Lokichokio, in northern Kenya, which has been treating patients from Sudan since 1987.

ICRC teams are continuing their surveys in a number of locations in Bahr al-Ghazal, as well as in the Lakes and Equatoria provinces. Their conclusions, which will be based on both the conditions of the local population and the capacity of other humanitarian organizations working in those areas, will guide further ICRC emergency assistance to those in need.

Apart from the emergency relief work described above, the ICRC is planning longer-term integrated projects in some communities. It will set up clinics and water and sanitation facilities, and will provide other assistance to enable the local population to recover some degree of economic self-sufficiency.

The ICRC recently completed a second visit to prisoners detained in connection with the conflict in southern Sudan by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. In addition, the ICRC’s tracing service in Sudan handles up to six thousand Red Cross messages every month, thus allowing relatives separated by the conflict to remain in touch.

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++ 249 11 467 709
Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 22 81
AFGHANISTAN

ICRC BRINGS MEDICAL AID TO MAZAR-I-SHARIF

After the recent heavy fighting between Taliban forces and the northern alliance in Mazar-i-Sharif, the ICRC delivered 200 medical sets for war-wounded patients to the city's military hospital, from where it also transferred six wounded people to the hospital in Shibirghan.

The situation remains tense in Mazar-i-Sharif and the surrounding area – where the ICRC has carried on working through its Afghan employees – as well as in several other regions of the country. Otherwise, ICRC activities are continuing in Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat and Ghazni.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 22 24

GUINEA-BISSAU

ICRC CONVOY CROSSES THE FRONT LINE

On 10 August an ICRC convoy carried food supplies across the front line in Guinea-Bissau. The convoy went from the capital, Bissau, to the towns of Mansoa and Canchungo, in the part of the country that has been in rebel hands since early June. Seven trucks delivered 80 tonnes of food (mainly rice, tinned meat and oil) originating from World Food Programme (WFP) stocks and a Portuguese government donation.

The displaced, whose numbers are put at around 250,000, have mainly found shelter with local residents or have returned to their villages. With the support of the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau, the ICRC has provided over 300 tonnes of food in the Cacheu, Quinara, Bafatá and Tombali areas since the conflict broke out. The National Society and the ICRC have also distributed nearly 300 tonnes of WFP food to some 50,000 people remaining in the capital.

The ICRC is continuing negotiations to gain access to all persons detained in connection with the conflict. A programme has been set up to enable members of families separated by the fighting to exchange news via Red Cross messages.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 22 81

COLOMBIA

EVACUATIONS FOLLOW CLASHES

On 5 August, after intense fighting between government armed forces and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) rocked the Miraflores region of Guaviare department in eastern Colombia, the ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross carried out an operation to evacuate the wounded and transport mortal remains out of the area.
Having received a request on 5 August to proceed with the evacuation operation, the ICRC and the National Society chartered a DC3 aircraft the same day to reach the remote region. Once the necessary authorizations had been obtained, the ICRC team arrived in Miraflores, from where 14 wounded soldiers were transferred to hospital in the departmental capital, San José del Guaviare, by Colombian Red Cross volunteers. The mortal remains of nine soldiers were later flown out by the ICRC plane and brought to the military base in San José.

Further information: Béatrice Mégevand-Roggo, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 29 04

ANGOLA

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CONFLICT VICTIMS

Following the recent clashes in Bula, in Lunda Norte province, the ICRC has been providing medical assistance for the victims of the fighting. The delegation has been working with the Angola Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to deliver the aid.

Some 100 kilograms of medical supplies -- enough to cover the needs of 10,000 patients for one month -- were handed over to the hospital in Kuango, which supplies the municipality's medical facilities. The assistance, which also includes dressings, antibiotics and antimalarial drugs, will make it possible not only to deal with medical emergencies related to the conflict but also to treat the diseases that are most prevalent in the region.

Further information: Paolo Dell'Oca, ICRC Luanda, tel. ++ 2442 366 288

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org :
- Update No 98/04 on ICRC activities in Guinea-Bissau, dated 10.08.98

During the weekend of
15 - 16 August 1998, for all
information please call the press
officer on duty Amanda Williamson,
on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
SUDAN

ICRC KITCHENS FEED DISPLACED PEOPLE IN TONJ

The small town of Tonj in the Bahr el Ghazal region of southern Sudan normally has a population of about 600. These days the number varies between 8,000 and 12,000.

The ICRC is running three kitchens in Tonj for displaced people in urgent need of food. The first has been set up in an abandoned mission compound and caters for the most vulnerable, such as the blind, the disabled and people suffering from leprosy. It serves two meals a day, consisting of maize flour, beans, oil and salt, to 468 people.

Another of the kitchens, installed in what used to be a medical dispensary, is for severely malnourished children and adults. Behind the main building, plastic tarpaulins rigged up on poles protect the kitchen from the sun and rain. At mealtimes, all around the courtyard 460 people sit on the ground in well ordered groups and rows. Most have their plastic ICRC registration cards dangling from strings around their necks. Lines of ash on the ground separate the various sections of the compound. The first priority was to set up the kitchen, so there was no time to put up fences or other means of crowd control, but the symbolic perimeters are scrupulously respected.

Once the 460 are served, ICRC personnel look around for the weakest of the new arrivals who have not yet been registered at the kitchen. The remaining food is divided among them. ICRC nurse Corinne Borloz says that now the meal distribution system is in place the medical staff are starting to diagnose and treat common ailments, such as worm infestation, while people wait for their food.

A third ICRC facility is providing therapeutic milk and meals to children and mothers who are breast-feeding. Some 670 children receive four mugfuls of enriched milk and one meal of sorghum and beans a day. The children range in age from three to the early teens. Many are naked, others wear shirts or pieces of cloth tied at the shoulder. The bones and joints of a number of children are clearly visible through their skin. But, even among those who have regained some physical semblance of normal childhood, many of them have the reddish hair or bald spots that betray advanced malnutrition.

In front of the building are 180 women, each holding an infant or a small child. The mothers are given milk and two meals per day, and are encouraged to continue breast-feeding. With the help of a Dinka translator, ICRC nutritionist Jennifer MacMahon coaxes them to eat their meals: "You have to eat and drink more to produce more milk, or your babies will die."

This week the ICRC is airlifting 45 tonnes of food, together with blankets and tarpaulins, to the towns of Ajiep and Panthou. The food, consisting of high-energy biscuits, will be distributed to about 6,000 people through the feeding centres operated in both towns by Médecins sans frontières. "There are very high malnutrition and mortality rates among children and adults in Ajiep and Panthou", said Pierre Gratzl, the ICRC health coordinator for southern Sudan. "The ICRC has the logistic capacity to help, so that's what we're doing."

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
YUGOSLAVIA/MONTENEGRO

RED CROSS STRUGGLES TO COPE WITH INFLUX OF DISPLACED FROM KOSOVO

By mid-August the number of internally displaced persons from Kosovo registered in Montenegro was as high as 32,000, and their situation in terms of accommodation, hygiene and medical needs is starting to give cause for serious concern. Most of them have found refuge in the municipalities of Ulcinj, Plav and Rozaje. The displaced have now stopped entering these areas, because there is absolutely no more room left to house them.

On 13 August an ICRC team reached a group of 270 displaced people from Kosovo, including 150 children, who had found shelter in stables and shepherds' huts in the village of Bandzov, in the mountains above Rozaje. They were given blankets and hygiene items to meet their most urgent needs.

In Plav, the local hotel, which has been turned into a reception centre, is currently accommodating 630 displaced persons. The premises are overcrowded and sanitation conditions inadequate. An ICRC sanitation expert will look into the possibility of providing a sufficient supply of water and proper sanitation facilities for the hotel and other collective shelters, most of which are designed for completely different purposes and are not suited to house large numbers of people.

With its distribution network and the experience in catering for the requirements of 28,000 refugees gained during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the Red Cross of Montenegro is doing its utmost to help the new arrivals, but is finding it increasingly difficult to meet their needs. It is working with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC, which has supplied it with emergency aid for some 15,000 displaced people and is closely monitoring developments so as to be ready to cover any further humanitarian needs that may arise.

Further information: Gordona Milenkovic, ICRC Belgrade, tel. ++38111 761 063
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2224

SRI LANKA

INDIAN NATIONALS RELEASED UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

On 18 August, 17 Indian crew members of the merchant vessel Princess Kash were released by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and handed over to officials of the Indian High Commission in Colombo, under the auspices of the ICRC.

ICRC delegates have visited and registered the four Sri Lankan crew members still in LTTE custody, and have given them the opportunity to write Red Cross messages to their families.

On 14 August, the Princess Kash and her 21 crew members became stranded off the coast of north-eastern Mullaitivu and were seized by LTTE forces. The ICRC was immediately contacted by the parties involved and asked to act as a neutral intermediary.

The ICRC has been in Sri Lanka since 1989. A total of 45 expatriates and 300 Sri Lankans are currently working out of its offices in Colombo, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mallavi, Puthukkudiyiruppu, Jaffna, Mutur, Akkaraiapattu, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Point Pedro.

Further information: Harasha Gunewardene, ICRC Colombo, tel. ++941 503 346
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2224
Riki could not believe his eyes. Though he is one of the most experienced pilots flying for the ICRC, with about 30,000 hours under his belt, he had never seen anything like this. Just three weeks earlier he had flown 10 anxious amputees from Malange to Huambo. They could barely walk, let alone board the aircraft on their own. And now those same people were going home, happy and grateful for their recovered freedom of movement and dignity. With pride, they marched past the flabbergasted pilot up the steps to the plane, brandishing crutches which had, for them, become useless and even cumbersome. "This is one flight I will never forget", Riki told us.

In Angola the ICRC flies amputees to the Huambo and Kuito limb-fitting centres, which are run jointly by the ICRC and the Angolan Ministry of Health. This service began in September 1997 with patients from Lunda Norte province, and was stepped up in March 1998. Over 100 amputees from remote provinces such as Cabinda and Malange have already received artificial limbs at the ICRC centres.

Further information: Paolo Dell'Oca, ICRC Luanda, tel. ++2442 366 666

CHANGES IN THE PRESS UNIT

As from 21 August 1998 Urs Boegli will head the ICRC's new Media Unit. He will also act as spokesman for the organization, replacing Philippe Lazzarini, who will be taking up other duties. The Unit will be under the immediate responsibility of the Director-General.

Urs Boegli joined the ICRC in 1980. He later served as head of delegation in Sudan, Thailand, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cambodia, before being appointed Deputy Delegate-General for Asia and the Pacific. He currently holds the post of head of the Communication Department.

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- ICRC Update 98/07 on the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in response to the crisis in Kosovo, dated 12.08.98

During the weekend of 22 - 23 August 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
AFGHANISTAN

ICRC STILL PRESENT

Following the recent events in Afghanistan, including the US air strikes, the ICRC has received security guarantees from the Taliban authorities and is maintaining its operation in the country.

A reduced staff of about 30 expatriates is continuing to carry out protection and assistance activities alongside some 1,000 local employees at ICRC offices in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, Ghazni and Mazar-i-Sharif. Five delegates have recently arrived in Mazar-i-Sharif to assess the situation and pursue the ICRC's medical and protection activities there.

The six Ministry of Health hospitals supported by the ICRC (two in Kabul and one each in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Ghazni and Herat) are well stocked and running normally. In Kandahar, there are eight expatriate doctors and nurses handling emergency cases. The ICRC has provided medical supplies for the hospital in Pul-i-Khumri, which received numerous casualties after the recent fighting in the region, and the hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif. In addition, the limb-fitting centres in Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kabul and Jalalabad are continuing to supply prostheses for amputees.

As part of the ICRC's sanitation projects in Afghanistan, some 6,500 latrines have been built or repaired in Kabul and in the country's prisons since the beginning of the year.

Last week the ICRC concluded its distributions in the capital for some 25,000 families headed by widows or amputees. The distributions will resume in September. Meanwhile, the "food-for-work" programme designed to facilitate the return of displaced people from camps near Herat to Bala Murgab is continuing.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 22 24

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

FIRST VISITS TO DETAINEES AND WATER FOR POPULATION

On 19 August the ICRC began conducting visits, in accordance with its customary working procedures, to people held at the Kokolo military base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So far, delegates have seen some 160 detainees and distributed food, blankets and hygiene items. The ICRC is continuing its efforts to obtain access to all persons held in connection with the conflict in the country.

For the past week the ICRC has also endeavoured to alleviate problems caused by electricity cuts in Kinshasa. A continuous supply of electricity is essential to prevent shortages of drinking water, which is so crucial to the survival of the city's millions of inhabitants. Since the cuts began, an ICRC tanker truck has delivered water on a regular basis to various neighbourhoods.
In addition, water tanks have been installed in the 2,000-bed general hospital in Kinshasa and at the Kokolo and Ceta military hospitals. The water storage capacity of the general hospital has been brought to 59,000 litres, with special tanks covering the needs of the surgical and maternity wards. At the same time, rehabilitation work is continuing on the facility's septic tank and toilets.

The ICRC has also provided transport to bring chemicals needed for water purification to the three main water treatment plants in Kinshasa and has delivered some 30 tonnes of salt to Régideso, the national supplier of chlorine.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 22 81

YUGOSLAVIA/KOSOVO

ICRC BRINGS SURGICAL TEAM TO THE WOUNDED

For the past week the ICRC has been ferrying a team of six local surgeons to various field hospitals in urgent need of assistance in Kosovo. The six, who volunteered for the task, have so far performed close to 60 operations - including 13 major ones - in three different locations. Their patients include women and children.

This move follows the discovery last week by an ICRC health delegate of an exhausted surgeon who was working alone in a makeshift clinic and desperately needed help to cope with the influx of patients, many of whom were seriously wounded. The ICRC undertook negotiations with the Serb authorities in Pristina to obtain permission for the team to begin its work.

Says Margaret Bryson, the ICRC health delegate who organized this assistance: "The dedication and courage shown by the team are really impressive. They realized that their skills were needed, and didn't hesitate to go".

Meanwhile, ICRC teams are continuing to provide transport for particularly vulnerable people so that they can be reunited with their families or taken to centres where proper care is available. Last week the ICRC received authorization from the Ministry of Health to take four elderly people to Pristina, where they either entered a rest home or were reunited with their families. They had been discovered in a very weak state and virtually abandoned in an institution near Decane, where the living conditions were appalling.

Further information: Amanda Williamson or Nic Sommer, ICRC Pristina, tel. ++4179 357 1524, Gordana Milenkovic, ICRC Belgrade, tel. ++381 11 761 063

SUDAN

ASSISTANCE TO FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

Some 59,000 people forced to leave their homes on account of the fighting around Kassala in north-eastern Sudan have found refuge in six makeshift camps.

Many of the 25,000 displaced since July are living in huts made of branches covered with bits of cloth to protect them against the rain and sun. The rainy season in Kassala lasts from July to October and has turned the camps into a morass of thick mud and streams of runoff water.
Since March, the Sudanese Red Crescent has been distributing blankets, plastic sheeting, water bags, cooking pots and soap supplied by the ICRC. It is also operating three clinics serving both displaced Sudanese and refugees from Eritrea. The ICRC is providing assistance in running the clinics.

"Although international attention is largely focused on the severe food shortage in southern Sudan, the displaced in Kassala are nonetheless in a precarious situation", explained head of delegation Pierre Ryter.

The ICRC is giving structural support to the local branch of the Sudanese Red Crescent, which in addition to caring for the displaced is also providing emergency aid for 200 families in Kassala forced from their homes last week by flooding of the Gash river.

**FREED SOLDIERS RETURN HOME**

On 20 August, 77 government soldiers released by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the town of Yei, near the Ugandan border in southern Sudan, were flown to Khartoum aboard an ICRC-chartered plane. The soldiers had been held for periods ranging from one to 11 years. With the agreement of the Sudanese government and the SPLA, the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary in this operation.

In early June the SPLA had asked the ICRC to help the soldiers rejoin their families in government-controlled areas of the country. ICRC delegates subsequently had private interviews with each soldier to check whether they wished to return home or remain in the south. Only a few had elected to stay.

Among those flown home was Mohammed, whose 22-year-old daughter can finally start planning her wedding day. During his captivity, she had written him Red Cross messages saying that she wanted to get married and promising to put off the ceremony until his release. Mohammed last saw his daughter when she was 12.

Before boarding the plane, each former captive received a new set of clothing from the ICRC. But the main concern for one member of the group was whether or not he could keep the Red Cross messages he had received from his family while he was in captivity.

The ICRC organizes the exchange of such messages between family members separated by armed conflict. For many years Red Cross messages were the only way most of the released soldiers could keep in touch with their relatives. All the soldiers were allowed to keep their messages.

Further information, Bernard Barrett, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

During the weekend of 29 - 30 August 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
SUDAN

CLEAN WATER ESSENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL

Water-borne disease can be as deadly as famine. "It's the second biggest problem, the one people mention after the shortage of food," says ICRC water and sanitation engineer Marie Francoise Timmermans. "A lot of the people's water sources here have been sabotaged during the fighting, and unless something is done to improve their access to drinking water, there is going to be a lot of disease. We are already seeing many cases of worms, especially in young children, as well as diarrhoea and dysentery".

In the southern Sudanese town of Yirol, for example, there used to be 45 open wells and pump-equipped bore holes. When ICRC delegates arrived there recently, there was one single bore hole for an estimated population of 7,000. "Our plan is to provide at least one source of clean water for every thousand residents," says Timmermans. "That is, seven for a town like Yirol."

When the conflict strikes towns like Yirol, pumps are destroyed and bore holes are clogged with rocks and chunks of cement. Human corpses have even been thrown into open wells to contaminate them. Water and sanitation work is an absolute necessity since clean drinking water is indispensable to the recovery of famine victims even when they have received sufficient food.

So far in Yirol, the ICRC's engineers have unclogged two bore holes, drilled a third and are working on two others. One well near the market in the centre of town is being cleaned and another will be repaired once debris have been removed and chlorine added to purify the water. Fifty dry latrines are also being set up to improve sanitation and reduce the risk of disease.

After they have completed the initial phase in Yirol, water and sanitation crews will begin a series of projects in surrounding communities before moving further to the south-east in coming months.

In Tonj, another SPLA-controlled town in southern Sudan, the ICRC is about to drill three bore holes in the centre of town and repair the pump for a fourth. This work should be completed in the next few weeks. Many sources of water are situated in premises that are closed in the evenings, thus depriving the population of round-the-clock access to clean water. Once this is remedied, the ICRC team in Tonj will install pumps and rehabilitate three other bore holes in smaller communities in that region.

ICRC water and sanitation teams are also working in the government-held town of Wau and are planning operations in other areas.

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 22 81

During the weekend of 5 - 6 September 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Rubén Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
AFGHANISTAN

ICRC FACING DIFFICULTIES

Since the town of Mazar-i-Sharif came under Taliban control, the ICRC has faced major difficulties in discharging its mandate of protection for the victims of the situation.

Delegates arrived in Mazar-i-Sharif on Sunday 16 August, and began assessing needs shortly thereafter. They had numerous contacts with the authorities on the spot with a view to carrying out their humanitarian work, emphasizing the need to provide protection for detainees, minorities and the displaced.

Despite the dialogue it has maintained with the Taliban both in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, the ICRC has not been authorized to have regular access to places of detention, and contacts with the Hazara minority in and around Mazar-i-Sharif have been restricted.

The ICRC is stepping up its representations to the Taliban authorities so as to be allowed to carry out its protection work unhindered.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 24 54

SIERRA LEONE

ICRC TO USE HELICOPTER TO REACH VICTIMS OF FIGHTING

From the end of this week the ICRC will have a helicopter to enable it to go to areas in northern and eastern Sierra Leone that are difficult to reach overland. In these regions ongoing clashes between rebel groups and West African troops have forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee their villages and take refuge in the surrounding forest.

"The ICRC is very much concerned about the situation of these people in terms of food and medical care", said Jean-Luc Metzker, head of the ICRC delegation in Sierra Leone. "They have had no access to humanitarian aid, which up to now has been limited to less remote areas. With the helicopter we shall be able to reach them directly to assess their needs and set up emergency assistance programmes."
The helicopter will also allow delegates to evacuate serious casualties to medical facilities in the capital, Freetown, where they will be treated by an ICRC surgical team which has been working for several months at the Netland hospital.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
WATER AND WAR

This coming weekend the ICRC will charter two aircraft in Kenya to fly supplies to the Congolese capital, Kinshasa. In addition to emergency medical material, the planes will carry several tonnes of chlorine for use at water treatment plants, together with salt, which after processing will also be used for water treatment. Because of the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, stocks of chemicals needed for water purification are running out. Meanwhile the electricity supply has been only partially restored.

Priority has been given to providing the main hospitals and dispensaries with drinking water, using the existing distribution system. To compensate for water shortages resulting from lack of power at pumping stations, the water authorities in Kinshasa and the ICRC have organized the delivery of drinking water to the city's poorer neighbourhoods by tanker truck.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- Update 98/10 on ICRC activities in Afghanistan, dated 28.08.98

For any information you may need on Thursday 10 September (national holiday) or on the weekend of 12-13 September please call the press officer on duty Suzanne Berger, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 05
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

ICRC GAINS ACCESS TO FURTHER PLACE OF DETENTION IN KINSHASA

On 14 September ICRC delegates conducted their first visit, in accordance with the organization’s customary working procedures, to persons held at the Kinshasa Penitentiary and Rehabilitation Centre. They registered 111 detainees at the facility, formerly known as Makala prison.

Meanwhile, delegates are continuing the regular visits they began on 19 August to people detained at the Kokolo military camp in the capital. The ICRC is also pursuing its efforts to gain access to all persons throughout the country who have been deprived of their freedom in connection with the conflict.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

SUDAN

FURTHER ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS IN THE EAST

An ICRC team comprising a water and sanitation expert, a nurse and a relief delegate is currently conducting a survey in the Kassala region to assess the most urgent needs of victims of the floods in this part of eastern Sudan, where shelling has already caused many people to flee their homes.

Since March, the ICRC has regularly provided cooking sets, water bags, soap, blankets and mosquito nets to 30,000 people displaced as a result of the conflict in the area. More recently, it distributed 9,310 blankets, 3,250 tarpaulins and 10,000 sandbags to help the flood victims. The three delegates carrying out the survey are bringing in further relief supplies and medicines.

The team will be working in close cooperation with the local branch of the Sudanese Red Crescent in Kassala to provide assistance to vulnerable groups in the region.

ICRC RESUMES TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR NURSING AIDES

On 7 September a group of 12 enthusiastic Sudanese students from all parts of southern Sudan gathered at the ICRC Lopiding Hospital classroom in Lokichokio in northern Kenya to begin a six-month training course for nursing aides. "One of our objectives is to help improve local health care in southern Sudan", explained Julie Young, the ICRC nurse responsible for the programme.

Over the next six months, the students will be trained as assistants in the operating theatre, anaesthesia, ward nursing and physiotherapy. Instruction combines both lectures and practical exercises in the wards.
The ICRC launched this training programme in 1989, and a full-time ICRC teaching nurse has been assigned to the project since 1992. So far more than 170 Sudanese students have successfully completed the course at Lopiding Hospital. Several Sudanese doctors have also attended shorter refresher courses on war surgery.

Further information: France Hurtubise, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++249 11 476 464  
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

KENYA

SHELTER FOR RIFT VALLEY RETURNEES

The ICRC, together with the Kenya Red Cross Society, is distributing construction materials this week to families who have returned to the Laikipa District of Kenya's Rift Valley Province. These families are among those who fled in January this year to escape ethnic violence that had erupted in parts of the province. They now have no homes to go back to.

This is the third phase in a programme that so far has involved the provision of food and non-food aid, and agricultural assistance in the form of seed and basic farming tools.

The materials being distributed include roofing sheets, ridges and nails for the 69 houses under construction. More families will receive support once the houses being built reach roof level. The programme is being carried out in cooperation with the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the local diocese of the Catholic church and members of the community itself.

"These people have been living in temporary shelters for almost a year", said ICRC delegate Emmanuel Campbell. "The materials we provide will help them achieve the dream of having a permanent roof over their heads, and this will facilitate their resettlement."

At the same time, the ICRC and the Kenya Red Cross will hand over seven wells to the community elders. The wells, dug with the help of the ICRC's water and sanitation unit, are already supplying desperately needed safe water to over 20,000 people.

Further information: Nina Galbe, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++254 2 716 339

BRAZIL

MILITARY POLICE RECEIVE INSTRUCTION IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

The first course on human rights and international humanitarian law for members of the military police, organized by the Brazilian Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the ICRC, was held from 31 August to 18 September at the National Police Academy in Brasilia. It brought together 21 officers who are to serve as instructors and dissemination officers within the military police force.
During the second half of this two-phase programme, scheduled from 5 October to 18 December, the 21 new instructors will be giving 20 similar courses to train a further 300 military police instructors throughout the country.

The courses teach participants techniques to limit the use of force and firearms in carrying out police duties, one of the main objectives being to ensure protection of the public at large and the physical safety of both police officers and suspects.

Further information: Iván Godoy, ICRC Brasilia, tel. ++5561 248 02 50
Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2454

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**DEADLINE FOR IRU/ICRC PHOTO COMPETITION EXTENDED**

The photo competition jointly organized by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the ICRC to mark the award of the IRU's Grand Prix d'Honneur to the ICRC, in recognition of the commitment of its drivers to the humanitarian cause, has been extended to 30 September 1998. The competition comprises three categories, and in the humanitarian category entries must illustrate the importance of road transport in humanitarian operations in the field. The winner will receive a prize of 5,000 Swiss francs, which will be awarded in early November at the preview of the exhibition of the best pictures opening at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva. The rules of the competition may be obtained from ICRC field delegations, National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies or from ICRC headquarters in Geneva.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2384
fax: ++4122 730 2899, e-mail: rex_pro.gva@icrc.org

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New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- ICRC Update 98/08 on the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in response to the crisis in Kosovo, dated 15.09.98

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During the weekend of 19 - 20 September 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Urs Boegli, on (mobile) 41 79 203 94 05
AFGHANISTAN

INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET ATTACKS ON KABUL

Several volleys of rockets fell on Kabul on 20 and 21 September, killing 76 people according to the Taliban authorities. These indiscriminate attacks – concentrated in the northern part of the city and notably striking the night market – were the deadliest the Afghan capital had seen in three years. The ICRC swung into action to take the victims, most of them women and children, to the two hospitals it supports in the city.

For security reasons the ICRC recently reduced its staff in Afghanistan, leaving approximately 20 expatriates working in Kabul and about the same number elsewhere around the country. Delegates based in the capital continue providing food and medical aid for civilians, visiting detainees and supporting the Afghan Red Crescent Society.

ICRC employee among victims

The ICRC was saddened to learn of the death of one of its employees, Abdul Saboor, who was killed at his home during the rocket attack on 20 September. Mr Saboor had worked for the Kabul delegation's construction service since 1990. The organization conveys its deepest sympathy to his family.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2454

KENYA

WATER – THE SOURCE OF LIFE

The ICRC and the Kenya Red Cross Society this week handed over seven bore-hole sites to the community of Ol Moran, in Kenya's Rift Valley province. This marks the end of the latest phase in a project to improve conditions for people who fled the inter-ethnic violence that erupted last January, and have now returned home. The bore-holes will ensure a lasting supply of clean water for domestic use.

"The Red Cross brings in the necessary technical assistance, but without the efforts of local people this would never have been achieved", said Vincent Nicod, head of the ICRC delegation in Nairobi. "It's simply a matter of helping people to help themselves."
The province is in a semi-arid region, where competition for scarce water has been a key source of conflict. The holes have been sunk in locations identified by local people as on undisputed neutral ground. This means that clean water will be freely available to everyone, thus lessening tension. Residents previously had to draw water from the few dammed reservoirs in the area. Used both for human consumption and to water livestock, these are heavily contaminated and there have been a number of reports of typhoid fever. In the dry season, the water in most of the reservoirs evaporates, forcing the local population to walk as far as 20 km.

The bore-holes are only one part of an extensive programme that has seen the distribution of seed, farming implements, blankets and construction materials to a community that is only just returning to often wrecked homes.

The Geneva-based organization and the Kenyan Red Cross plan to continue their aid by repairing the dams and installing troughs to be used by livestock.

As ICRC water and sanitation engineer Pascal Jansen explains, "The aim is to ensure a water supply of sufficient quality for all communities, and to leave the dams mainly for emergencies."

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

UGANDA

ENHANCING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The ICRC has completed distribution of 141 tonnes of seed (groundnuts) to some 212,000 people in northern Uganda: 94,000 people displaced near Gulu and 118,000 displaced in the Kitgum area. The final round of distributions, completed on 15 September, was held at the very end of the planting season. The ICRC's aim is to make people forced to flee the conflict in northern Uganda less dependent on humanitarian aid.

ICRC operations in Uganda focus on helping the displaced, visiting detainees and aiding people wounded by the fighting.

The ICRC has been working in Uganda since the 1970s. It currently has 22 expatriate personnel in the country and 123 locally recruited staff.

Further information, Josué Anselmo, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2281

During the weekend of
26 - 26 September 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Josué Anselmo, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
LESOTHO

LESOTHO RED CROSS AIDING VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Following the recent outbreak of violence in Lesotho and subsequent military intervention by South Africa and Botswana on 22 September, the Lesotho Red Cross Society swung into action to meet urgent needs. First-aid workers treated the injured and took some 60 people to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The Society also took hospital staff from their homes to work in vehicles protected by the red cross emblem.

An ICRC delegate based in neighbouring South Africa promptly went to Lesotho's capital, Maseru. In accordance with its mandate, the ICRC requested and was granted access to persons detained in connection with the violence. Some 151 people held by the South African and Botswana armed forces and by Lesotho security forces have so far been visited by the ICRC, which forwarded 57 private messages ("Red Cross messages") from them to their families. The majority of those detained were subsequently released. The ICRC continues to monitor the situation along with the Lesotho Red Cross in order to take further action if necessary.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281

KENYA/SUDAN

INFLUX AT LOKICHOKIO HOSPITAL

Several dozen new casualties are being admitted every week to the ICRC's surgical hospital in Lokichokio, northern Kenya. Last week, patients suffering from gunshot wounds were brought to the facility from 21 locations in southern Sudan. So far this year, the hospital has treated 1,280 people.

Because there are virtually no health-care facilities left in southern Sudan after 16 years of war and owing to the scarcity of medical care in the region around Lokichokio, the ICRC hospital also admits pregnant women, people bitten by snakes and crocodiles, and accident victims.

In addition to providing surgical services, the ICRC runs a limb-fitting centre which produces over 250 artificial limbs a year and provides basic instruction in medical care to its patients, who put their knowledge to use when they return home.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2281
An ICRC surgical team has carried out over 400 operations on war-wounded patients at the Netland surgical centre in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, since the facility opened on 26 June.

Most of the people treated are suffering from gunshot wounds or injuries caused by grenades or machetes. They come mainly from the north and east of the country, where rebel fighters are battling Sierra Leone government forces, West African forces (ECOMOG) and traditional Kamajor hunters.

About 20 patients who have lost both hands have undergone surgery using the Krukenberg procedure. Bernhard Mandrella, a German surgeon working for the ICRC, explained: "This is an old method which consists in separating the bones and muscles at the stump for a distance of a few centimetres, leaving the patient with a sort of a pincer. After a few weeks of special exercises these double amputees recover some mobility in their stumps and thus regain a measure of independence, which is crucial for their return to normal life".

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 2281

BHUTAN
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING RENEWED

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Bhutanese Government and the ICRC allowing the latter to visit persons detained for "anti-national activities" was renewed on 20 September 1998 following an audience with His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk and Home Minister Lyompo Thinley Jamtsho in the Bhutanese capital, Thimpu.

The ICRC started visiting security detainees in Bhutanese prisons in 1993 under a memorandum that was due to lapse in November this year. It has now been renewed for a further five-year period as a mark of the authorities' confidence in the role played by the ICRC in this domain.

Between 17 and 24 September 1998 the ICRC carried out a visit, in accordance with its standard procedures, to 127 detainees in Thimpu District Jail and 54 others in Chamgang Central Jail. During the visit delegates distributed 34 Red Cross messages sent to detainees by relatives living in refugee camps in Jhapa, eastern Nepal. Fifty-five messages were collected from the detainees for delivery when the ICRC next goes to the Jhapa camps. The Royal Bhutanese Government renewed its commitment to authorizing families who live in Nepal to visit relatives detained in Bhutan. Such visits have taken place in the past with the ICRC's assistance.

The King also expressed a keen interest in spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law among the police and armed forces with the cooperation of the ICRC.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 3203

During the weekend of 3-4 October 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Rubén Ortega, on (mobile) 41 79 217 32 03
ERITREA-ETHIOPIA
HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

Relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia have remained tense since hostilities broke out in May 1998, and the ICRC has continuously maintained its assistance to those affected by the conflict situation. In Eritrea, following its visit to a group of prisoners of war immediately before their repatriation to Ethiopia at the end of August, the ICRC has started to visit civilian internees in various places of detention. It is pursuing its efforts to gain access to all prisoners of war. In Ethiopia, the ICRC has continued its regular visits to all prisoners of war and to civilian internees.

A network has been established for the exchange of family news between interned persons and their relatives; to date, some 700 Red Cross messages have thus been delivered in and between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The ICRC is also actively involved in reuniting unaccompanied minors with their parents.

In its capacity as a neutral humanitarian intermediary, since early August the ICRC has ensured safe passage for Eritrean and Ethiopian civilians across the front lines. Eighteen such crossings have been organized so far. Furthermore, it has regularly brought up recurrent humanitarian problems with the relevant authorities.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Society of Eritrea are also engaged in assisting the victims of the conflict in cooperation with the ICRC. In response to the needs assessed on both sides, they have provided support for ambulance services, delivered supplies to medical facilities and first-aid material to Red Cross volunteers and distributed blankets, jerrycans, cooking pots, kitchen sets and other basic necessities. Further programmes are being worked out to prepare for all eventualities.

Following the outbreak of hostilities, the ICRC officially opened an office in Eritrea in August 1998 and is now endeavouring to protect and assist the victims of this international armed conflict in accordance with its mandate and to foster implementation of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The ICRC's standard working procedures include confidential relations with the authorities concerned.

Further information: Yves Giovannoni, ICRC Addis Ababa, tel: ++2511 518 366
Peter Iseli, ICRC Asmara, tel: ++2911 20 24 60
ICRC PRESIDENT CALLS FOR GLOBALIZATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AT OPENING MEETING OF UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga was invited to speak as a special guest at the opening of the 49th annual meeting of the UNHCR Executive Committee on 5 October 1998 in Geneva. Addressing the representatives of 53 UNHCR member States, countries with observer status and international organizations within the framework of the overall theme "International solidarity and burden-sharing", Mr Sommaruga made a rousing plea for a "globalization of responsibility" in meeting today's humanitarian challenges. He said that this needed to be developed along the lines of "a shared solidarity that does not diminish the responsibility of States but encourages and strengthens it through the expectations and combined responses of other centres of power" in today's society.

The President went on to state that international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law all tended towards a common goal, based as they were on ethical standards of solidarity that constituted a common heritage of mankind. Referring to international humanitarian law in particular, he pointed out that if its rules and principles were complied with a large proportion of population movements caused by armed conflict could be avoided, adding that humanitarian law applied to refugees, the internally displaced and returnees as civilians threatened by hostilities.

As regards coordination between the ICRC and UNHCR in the field, Mr Sommaruga said that when there was a risk of duplication of effort, as in Kosovo, Colombia and Sri Lanka, frank discussion between the two organizations generally led to a clearer division of responsibilities. The aim in that respect was to achieve maximum complementarity, while taking due account of the specific role and areas of competence of each of them.

In conclusion, the President reiterated the ICRC's intention to continue to develop its independent humanitarian action in order to reach all victims suffering the effects of armed conflicts and violence, including the internally displaced, and welcomed the completion of the "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement" presented by Mr Francis Deng at the 54th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Further information: Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 4122 730 3203

During the weekend of 9-10 October 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Pierre Gauthier, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 70
SUDAN / KENYA

INFLUX OF WOUNDED FROM EQUATORIA

Renewed fighting in the southern Sudanese region of Eastern Equatoria has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of patients being admitted to ICRC-supported medical facilities in the area. On 2 October, the ICRC flew 33 wound victims to its surgical hospital in Lokichokio, in northern Kenya, and is now organizing a further evacuation.

The past six weeks have seen a 40% rise in admissions to the Lokichokio hospital as compared with July and August. In the first two weeks of October alone, 100 new patients were treated there, most arriving from Equatoria. More than half were suffering from gunshot wounds.

The ICRC surgical team at the Juba teaching hospital has recently treated 20 war victims. Under a cooperation agreement between the hospital's ICRC-supported surgical facility and the local military hospital, the civilian unit will in future care for wounded soldiers in the event of an influx exceeding the military hospital's capacity.

Further information: France Hurtubise, ICRC Khartoum, tel. ++ 249 11 476 464
Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 22 81
GUINEA-BISSAU

ICRC ACTS AS NEUTRAL INTERMEDIARY

The members of the delegation representing the opposition forces at peace talks on Guinea-Bissau that took place in Abidjan in mid-September were stranded for three weeks in Banjul, Gambia, after problems arose in obtaining safety guarantees for their return by air over the zone held by Guinea-Bissau government troops. The Guinea-Bissau authorities therefore asked the ICRC, which has been present in the country since the rebellion began, to arrange for the delegation to travel between the capital Bissau—a seaport and therefore accessible from international airspace—and the rebel-held area. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC obtained the consent of both parties for its plan to provide safe passage.

The operation took place on 8 October with the cooperation of diplomats from the countries that had taken part in the talks. The opposition representatives arrived by helicopter at the national stadium in Bissau, under government control, then travelled the dozen kilometres to the front lines in a convoy of several vehicles displaying the protective red cross emblem, before proceeding to an airforce base under opposition control.

Further information: Gilbert Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293
GUINEA-BISSAU
NEW OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING

ICRC delegates based in Bissau and Bafata have had difficulty in pursuing their humanitarian activities because of renewed hostilities since 9 October. After a lull of several months civilians had been gradually returning to the capital Bissau, but the intensity of the shelling has prompted a fresh exodus.

In Bissau, the ICRC delegates and volunteers of the National Red Cross Society have been setting up teams of first-aiders. The teams are equipped with vehicles, stretchers and blankets so that they can give first aid to casualties and evacuate them to the main hospital, which has already admitted a dozen seriously wounded civilians. When conditions permit, the delegates are continuing to provide medical facilities throughout the country with dressings and surgical supplies.

The ICRC renews its appeal to all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law. In particular, it urges them to distinguish civilians from combatants and to take the necessary measures to ensure that the population does not suffer the effects of military operations.

Further information: Gilbert Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293

AFGHANISTAN/IRAN
ICRC REPATRIATES IRANIAN PRISONERS

Twenty-six Iranian prisoners released in Kandahar by the Taliban were repatriated on 17 and 18 October. After ICRC delegates had interviewed them in private in order to ascertain that they wished to return to Iran, they were flown to Tehran aboard two aircraft, one made available by the ICRC and the other by the United Nations. The Iranians' release resulted from direct negotiations between United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and the supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar.
An ICRC plane had taken ten other Iranians, also held in Kandahar, back to Tehran on 12 October. Their release had been ordered by Mullah Omar to mark a visit to Afghanistan by a Palestinian delegation.

On 11 October the mortal remains of three Iranian diplomats were flown by ICRC aircraft from Mazar-i-Sharif to Mashad in Iran. The three men had been killed when Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the Taliban last August.

These transfers, all of which were carried out at the request of the parties, began on 11 September with the repatriation of the bodies of several Iranian diplomats and a journalist from Mazar-i-Sharif to Tehran. The operations bear witness to the confidence placed in the ICRC by the various parties concerned.

Further information: Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 761 242 260
Rubén Ortega, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2454
YUGOSLAVIA / KOSOVO
ICRC RELIEF FOR THE DISPLACED

In the past two weeks delegates have distributed 80 tonnes of wheat flour, spaghetti, sugar, salt and yeast to displaced persons in Kosovo. More than 8,000 blankets, 23,000 candles and other essential items have also been provided to ease the desperate plight of the thousands of people driven from their homes by the fighting in the Yugoslav province.

In addition, the ICRC has furnished 232 tonnes of food and non-food relief since 1 October to the Montenegrin branch of the Yugoslav Red Cross for nearly 50,000 Kosovars registered as displaced in Montenegro.

The Yugoslav Red Cross has received similar support from the ICRC for some 10,000 particularly needy people, and vehicles donated by the Italian Red Cross will soon be delivered to the National Society.

One of the most pressing challenges for the ICRC is to provide the displaced with emergency assistance as the rigours of winter begin to make themselves felt. In the coming weeks, basic items including warm clothes, boots and cooking stoves will be delivered to displaced people wherever they are to help them survive the frequently harsh winter conditions.

Further information: Josué Anselmo, ICRC Pristina, tel. +381 38 590 074
Gordona Milenkovic, ICRC Belgrade, tel. +381 11 761 063
Amanda Williamson, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2678
SRI LANKA
ICRC ASSISTS IN DETAINEE RELEASE

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have released six Sri Lankan government soldiers as well as two crewmen from the ferry Iris Mona and one from the M.V. Missen. Carried out under ICRC auspices, the release took place on 24 October.

Delegates handed the soldiers over to the military authorities in Vavuniya the same day, while the three civilians were escorted by the ICRC to Colombo, where they were reunited with their families the following day.

The nine detainees concerned were regularly visited by the ICRC prior to their release. The soldiers had been held by the LTTE since 1993, the two crewmen from the Iris Mona since 1995 and the Missen crewman since July 1997.

The ICRC has been present since 1989 in Sri Lanka, where 50 expatriate staff and 300 Sri Lankan nationals work out of its delegation in Colombo and eleven other offices in the north and east of the island country.

Further information: Harasha Gunawardene, ICRC Colombo, tel. ++941 503 346
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 2224

During the weekend of
31 October - 1 November 1998, for all
information please call the press officer on duty
Michael Kleiner, on (mobile) 41 79 202 42 00
GUINEA-BISSAU

ICRC ASSISTS DISPLACED PEOPLE

In spite of a peace agreement concluded by the parties to the conflict on 1 November, the humanitarian emergency in Guinea-Bissau is far from over. The accord put an end to the recent clashes, thus enabling the ICRC to resume its aid programme for the victims of the conflict. Today, 4 November, it is distributing basic necessities (mosquito nets, plastic sheeting, blankets, soap, cooking pots, jerricans and plastic buckets) to 2,000 families recently displaced in and around the towns of Prabis and Cumura. About 65% of the displaced in this area about 20 km west of Bissau are reported to be without shelter.

In its role as a neutral intermediary, on 28 October the ICRC evacuated 122 children and accompanying adults from a particularly hazardous area in Bissau to the Senegalese border post of Wassadou.

The ICRC has maintained five expatriates in Bafata and four in Bissau throughout the conflict.

Further information: Gérard Deléchat, ICRC Dakar, tel. ++221 8 241 293

AFGHANISTAN

ICRC RETURNS MORTAL REMAINS TO KABUL

At the request of the Taliban authorities and with the consent of Commander Massoud's forces, the ICRC transported four bodies from Bagram to Kabul on 30 October. The mortal remains were those of four members of the Taliban who had been held in the Panjshir valley and died in a road accident while being transferred by the detaining authorities. Several people were injured in the accident, and nine of them were visited by the ICRC.

The ICRC aircraft left Kabul for Bagram carrying a delegate and 1,350 kg of medicines and other medical supplies for the hospitals and clinics in the Panjshir valley and on the Shamali plain. When it returned to Kabul the ICRC handed the mortal remains over to the city's health authorities.

Further information: Juan Martinez, ICRC Kabul, tel. ++873 761 242 260
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2224
SRI LANKA

ICRC AND AUSTRIAN RED CROSS PROVIDE DRINKING WATER FOR 6,000 FAMILIES

Years of fighting between Sri Lankan government troops and the forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have drastically reduced the amount of drinking water available to the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities living on the east coast.

The first phase of a water supply project launched by the ICRC has now been completed with the help of the Austrian Red Cross. The 123,000 US dollar programme is aimed at restoring access to safe water for 6,000 families living in the conflict areas of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara Districts.

In view of the favourable impact of the project, the ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka plans to continue the work in 1999.

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Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. +41 22 730 2224

LIBERIA

ICRC HELPS RENOVATE POLICE CELLS

As part of its programme for detainees in Liberia, the ICRC has helped renovate the holding cells at Monrovia’s police headquarters. Rehabilitation work on the sewage and electrical systems has now been completed, and the prisoners have received plywood, mattresses, blankets and buckets. The refurbished cells each have a capacity of 30 inmates.

"When we visited this place for the first time, the inmates were standing ankle-deep in a morass of water, dirt and excrement", said Simeon Antoulas, head of the ICRC delegation in Monrovia. During the 1990-1997 civil war, most Liberian detention facilities had been partially or totally destroyed. Since 1997, the ICRC has been providing the authorities with materials and expertise to restore basic hygiene conditions in the major detention centres in the capital and upcountry.

In addition, the Liberia National Red Cross Society, with assistance from the World Food Programme, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the ICRC, is supplying daily food rations for the approximately 400 inmates in Liberia's five main prisons.

In the wake of the violent clashes that broke out last September, the ICRC once again stresses the need for its delegates to extend their visits to all temporary detention facilities (police stations, military bases, and so forth) in the country, so as to be able to assess detention conditions and register remaining security detainees.

Further information: Simeon Antoulas, ICRC Monrovia, tel. +231 22 63 06
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During the weekend of 7 - 8 November 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Amanda Williamson, on (mobile) 41 79 357 15 24
TAJIKISTAN

RELIEF FOR VICTIMS OF FIGHTING IN KHODJENT

In the two days following the violent clashes that erupted on 4 November in the region of Khodjent in northern Tajikistan, the ICRC’s delegations in Dushanbe and Tashkent, Uzbekistan, sent teams to the area. The delegates accompanied several convoys delivering medical and emergency relief to the wounded and other victims of the fighting. Between 6 and 8 November, as part of the same operation, the ICRC also evacuated 40 foreign nationals.

The ICRC has provided the five main hospitals in Khodjent and Chkalovsk with enough medical supplies to treat 300 wounded. Medical assistance was also given to the civilian and military hospitals in Dushanbe, which had admitted 94 soldiers wounded during the fighting.

In cooperation with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan and the local authorities, the ICRC surveyed further needs. In the centre of Khodjent 20 families left without shelter were given emergency aid, but some 1,000 additional people whose homes were damaged still require assistance. Between 400 and 500 persons were wounded during the clashes.

Although calm has returned to the regions of Khodjent and Chkalovsk, fighting continues around Aini, in the Zarafchan valley, situated between Dushanbe and Khodjent. Despite several attempts, the ICRC has not yet received permission from the authorities to go to the valley and assess needs there.

The ICRC has been present in Tajikistan since 1992. It works from a delegation in Dushanbe and two offices in Garm and Khorog.

Further information: Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel: ++41 22 730 22 24

SOMALIA

ICRC AND SOMALI RED CRESCENT ASSIST VICTIMS OF FIGHTING OVER KISMAYO

Heavy fighting for control over the coastal town of Kismayo broke out on 27 October between the forces of General Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan" and those of the Marehan clan backed by Hussein Aidid's militia. To date, at least 37 people have been killed and 150 wounded. Some of the wounded are receiving treatment at the hospital in Kismayo run by the Belgian branch of Médecins sans frontières.
The ICRC is providing medical items, logistical support and shrouds to the Somali Red Crescent Society in Kismayo. Volunteers have been mobilized to take the wounded to hospital and the dead to burial sites. The ICRC is also arranging for a commercial flight to deliver additional first-aid supplies to the town.

The wounded on the Marehan side have limited access to medical care, since the nearest health facility equipped to treat serious wounds is in Mogadishu. Poor road conditions, heavy rains and flooding have made the journey to the capital hazardous, and a number of people have died on the way there. Medical assistance is therefore also being given to these wounded, some of whom have been transferred to the Shifo hospital in Mogadishu South, a facility run by a group of private doctors. Light injuries are being treated in Jamame and Sangune, towns situated about 50 km north of the front line on the road to the capital, and the ICRC has provided the National Society with dressings for this purpose.

Further information: Nina Galbe, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++254 72 512 728

SUDAN

DISTRIBUTION OF BASIC SUPPLIES

The nutritional situation of the people most affected by the conflict in Sudan is slowly improving, but many of their other basic needs are not being met. To address this problem, the ICRC has begun to carry out distributions of non-food supplies.

In Chotbura, in the Upper Nile region, where it conducted a survey in early October, the ICRC has already provided 10,000 people with blankets, mosquito nets, cooking pots, soap, vegetable seed, agricultural tools and fishing tackle.

In the Bahr el Ghazal region, the hardest hit by famine, the ICRC has handed out blankets and tarpaulins to 12,000 people in the village of Ajiep, and the same items plus soap to another 4,000 in Panthou. In Wau, on the basis of a survey conducted in cooperation with volunteers from the Sudanese Red Crescent, a house to house distribution has been carried out in the Lokloko area. Most of the more than 1,600 beneficiaries are internally displaced people and returnees, many of whom were unaware of relief efforts.

In Rajek, a small town a few kilometres from Juba, the ICRC has handed out blankets, tarpaulins, kitchen sets, soap and water bags to over 1,000 displaced people.

The same items are currently being provided, in cooperation with the National Society, for 5,500 displaced people in Kassala, in the eastern part of the country.

Similar distributions are expected to take place in the coming weeks.

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KENYA

ONGOING ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF WAJIR MASSACRE

The ICRC and the Kenya Red Cross Society have just surveyed the needs of people displaced following the massacre in the north-eastern part of the country two weeks ago. Some 6,500 individuals were included in the survey, 80% of whom were women and children. Most of them are living in the open or in makeshift dwellings. Food and other basic supplies have been distributed and essential drugs provided for the local hospital and dispensaries.

"Apart from food, water and medicine, these people urgently need shelter, particularly now that the short rainy season has started", said ICRC cooperation delegate Emmanuel Campbell.

Even at the best of times, water is a limited resource in this arid part of the country. With so many people displaced, clean drinking water is vital to prevent the outbreak of disease. In the coming week, ICRC water and sanitation engineers plan to repair two boreholes in the Eldas and Arbajahan areas for use by both the displaced and local residents. This will meet the immediate needs of two-thirds of the displaced there. In the medium term, wells are to be cleaned up and fitted with hand pumps in the Griftu area also, and pit latrines dug to avoid any worsening in hygiene conditions.

So far 52 people have been reported missing by relatives. In an attempt to reunite separated family members, the National Society has started a tracing programme in the three areas where the displaced people have gathered.

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Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++4122 730 22 81

KENYA

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR LIFE

*Flowers in the Morning Sun* (*Maua kwenye jua la asubuhi*) is a play in Kiswahili aimed at fostering greater respect for life and human dignity during armed conflicts and internal disturbances. The production, supported by the ICRC and featuring local artists, was recently launched in Nairobi and has started touring the countryside.

As its setting, the play takes an imaginary country where indiscriminate violence is rife and where no respect is shown for humanitarian values, such as the principle of sparing women, children and elderly people. In real life, these values seem to have been forgotten in many parts of the world today.

"This play serves as a reminder. We know that humanitarian values are inherent in African cultures, but respect for them needs to be strengthened", said Vincent Nicod, head of the ICRC regional delegation in Nairobi.
Emmanuel Nyabera, production manager and ICRC officer in charge of promoting international humanitarian law, commented: "The reception has been excellent. People take the play very seriously and appreciate the fact that it is touring the whole country to spread an important message".

After six performances in Nairobi, the play hit the road. It has so far travelled to Maseno, Kisumu (western Kenya) and Nakuru in the Rift Valley. The performances, which are being held in universities, town halls and churches, have attracted thousands of Kenyans.

"The play is directed at all members of society, but especially young people, since they are the ones who are most often involved in armed conflicts," added Nyabera.

Further information: Nina Galbe, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++254 72 512 728

COLOMBIA

OPINION SURVEY ON WAR BEGINS

Deep in the jungle, in sophisticated offices, atop windswept mountains, in army barracks and rebel encampments, ICRC staff in Colombia and 30 Colombian Red Cross volunteers are seeking out and listening to former hostages and hostage-takers, soldiers and guerrilla fighters, security prisoners, civilians driven from their homes by fighting, aid workers, journalists and many others. Whether man, woman or child, all have a story to tell, a personal experience to share, an opinion to give on war.

"The Geneva Conventions are useless", said one former guerrilla. "They give us dignity and hope, they are one step on the road to peace", said others. "They need to be adapted to the local culture", said some. In Colombia, where people are currently being asked what they think about the limits to warfare set by humanitarian law and how compliance with the Geneva Conventions can be improved, everyone has something to say.

These discussions are the first stage of a worldwide survey that is being conducted from November 1998 to August 1999 in a dozen countries affected by armed conflict. The results will be published along with those of a parallel survey carried out in countries at peace. People on War is the name of the overall project, which aims to increase international awareness of the rules for people's protection in wartime and encourage discussion of humanitarian law in relation to modern-day conflict.

The project, marking the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions on 12 August 1999, was launched jointly by the ICRC and the British Red Cross on 10 November at the Imperial War Museum in London.

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During the weekend of 14 - 15 November 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Corinne Adam, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 80
LIBERIA

DETAINEES VISITED

After receiving authorization from the Ministries of Defence and Justice to enter Monrovia's central and military prisons, ICRC delegates went to the prisons from 9 to 12 November to visit persons arrested in connection with the clashes that had taken place in the capital in September.

The visits took place in accordance with the ICRC's standard working procedures and the delegates were able to assess the general conditions of detention in the two prisons. They subsequently discussed their findings with the relevant authorities.

In the military prison, the delegates identified a need for structural improvements in the areas of water supply, sanitation and waste disposal. These will be met in cooperation with the detaining authorities. The ICRC also intends to provide blankets, personal hygiene items and water containers for the newly registered prisoners.

Further information: Symeon Antoulas, ICRC Monrovia, tel: ++231 22 63 06

INDONESIA

NATIONAL SOCIETY HARD AT WORK
DURING VIOLENT CLASHES IN JAKARTA

During the violent clashes in Jakarta last week, in which 15 people were reported to have died and hundreds more to have been injured, 70 members of the Indonesian Red Cross Society treated 185 wounded on the spot and evacuated 174 others by ambulance to the eight nearest hospitals.

Starting on 10 November seven mobile health teams, working from ambulances and linked by radio to a crisis centre set up by the Indonesian Red Cross, provided first aid for the wounded at trouble spots throughout the capital. The crisis centre mobilized volunteers to man the ambulances while the National Society's permanent staff coordinated the operations and organized emergency blood collections. Among the volunteers were students who set up first aid posts at three universities in Jakarta.

During the periods of relative calm, mobile teams from the Indonesian Red Cross visited the hospitals and drew up lists of the victims so as to be able to help families looking for injured relatives. Eleven families benefited from this service.
The ICRC assisted the National Society by providing medical supplies. Although none of the volunteers suffered injuries, four vehicles were slightly damaged. The cost of repairing them was covered by the ICRC, which continues to support the National Society in its efforts to promote greater respect for the red cross emblem.

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SWITZERLAND
ENFORCING HUMANITARIAN LAW NATIONALLY

Compliance with international humanitarian law at national level and the punishment of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity were among the issues discussed at a meeting of common law experts held by the ICRC in Geneva last week. The meeting, similar to one convened last year for civil law experts, was attended by distinguished academics, senior members of the military and government officials from 16 common law States.

Participants assessed the type of legislation generally adopted in common law countries and addressed topics such as the role of national military law in enhancing enforcement of humanitarian law and the degree of complementarity between national and international enforcement systems. Discussions also focused on the importance of independent investigations and due process in prosecuting alleged war criminals, especially given the politically sensitive nature of such cases, and on the implications for national legislation of the recently adopted Statute of the International Criminal Court.

"This meeting marked the beginning of a process of consultation with common law States and provided an opportunity for thought-provoking and enlightening discussions", said Yves Sandoz, ICRC Director for International Law and Communication. "We hope that similar initiatives will be taken in the future to follow up these important issues and ensure better protection for war victims everywhere."

All those who attended the meeting were encouraged to keep in touch with one another and with the ICRC Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, which was set up in 1995 to help governments improve implementation in their countries. Legal assistance may also be obtained through National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

A report on the meeting will be published by mid-1999. It will contain practical advice for common law States on how to strengthen humanitarian law through national criminal and military law.

Further information: ICRC Advisory Service, Geneva, tel: 41 22 734 60 01

During the weekend of
21 - 22 November 1998, for all information please
call the press officer on duty
Suzanne Berger, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 70
KENYA

HEALTH FACILITIES HANDED OVER

Last week the ICRC and the Kenya Red Cross Society handed over to the local authorities a health centre in Kamarauwa and a dispensary in Cengalo, both in the Rift Valley province. This was part of a broader project designed to help resettle people displaced by ethnic violence that had erupted in the province in 1992.

The two facilities were rehabilitated by community members, using materials provided by the ICRC. In order to provide clean water for both the facilities and the population at large, a borehole was drilled at the dispensary and two others at the health centre, where solar power transformers were installed to supply electricity.

"The two communities have shown a lot of initiative in helping themselves and that's why the project has been so successful", said Vincent Nicod, head of the ICRC regional delegation in Nairobi. The facilities serve a total of 56,000 people, who previously had to walk very long distances to receive the most basic health care.

"This is just the beginning", said Joshua Ng’elu, Secretary-General of the Kenya Red Cross. "The local authorities now have to make sure they keep up these facilities so that people can use them for a long time."

Further information: Bertha Owuor, ICRC Nairobi, tel: ++2542 728 387

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

VISITS TO DETAINEES AND FAMILY NEWS

From the outset of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ICRC delegates in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi have focused most of their efforts on obtaining access to and visiting civilians and combatants detained in connection with the events.

With government authorization, the ICRC is currently conducting regular visits to over 3,500 people deprived of their freedom, both in the capital and in Katanga province, and assessing their conditions of detention. On the basis of its findings, it is helping the prison authorities to fulfil their responsibilities, which include providing the detainees with medicines, drinking water, food and other vital necessities.
When visiting detainees, ICRC delegates offer them the possibility of contacting their families. The Kinshasa delegation has already distributed 305 of the 562 Red Cross messages gathered from military detainees in Katanga and collected over 180 replies from families living in the capital. These messages are greeted with such joy that the those who distribute them are constantly reminded of how important their work is. Day after day, they roam the streets of the capital in search of people who, fearing the worst for their relatives, are far from imagining that they might receive a message from them.

In Kivu province, where visits to people held in connection with the conflict have just begun, ICRC delegates have been providing the main hospitals in Goma, Bukavu and Uvira with medicines since August 1998. As many smaller medical facilities have closed down, these hospitals have more and more work to do and are treating a large number of war wounded. Under programmes set up by the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assist the most vulnerable groups, food and vital necessities are being distributed to some 20,000 conflict victims. The beneficiaries, who include many displaced persons, are mainly children, widows and the elderly.

Further information: Michael Kleiner, ICRC Geneva, tel: ++4122 730 22 81

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CHECHNYA

ANOTHER HARSH WINTER AROUND THE CORNER

More than two and a half years after the end of hostilities, life in Grozny remains difficult for a great many inhabitants, especially with winter setting in. Reconstruction work has not progressed and the supply of water and heating, cut off during the conflict, has still not been restored to all areas of the city. According to ICRC estimates, about 60,000 vulnerable people living in and around Grozny depend on humanitarian aid for survival. Most of them are elderly members of the Russian minority.

This week, as part of the ICRC's winter assistance programme, the local Red Cross in Chechnya will receive food, blankets and candles for distribution to about 1,100 people registered in its social welfare and/or visiting nurses programmes. School supplies will also be provided for some 78,000 pupils.

Working from Nalchik, the ICRC supports the efforts of local Red Cross branches to assist particularly vulnerable people in seven republics of the northern Caucasus (Adygeya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya and Daghestan) and in the territories of Krasnodar and Stavropol in the southern part of the Russian Federation. The ICRC itself runs programmes in the region to help victims of the Chechen and the Ingush-Ossetian conflicts. Altogether, it provides regular assistance in the northern Caucasus for over 3,000 people monthly and another 4,800 quarterly. The ICRC also continues to supply about 10,500 people in Grozny, Argun, Shali, Gudermes and Urus Martan with 12 loaves of bread each per month.
Security conditions still prevent the ICRC from deploying expatriate staff in Chechnya, Daghestan and Ingushetia. Assistance programmes in these three republics are therefore conducted from afar with the cooperation of local Red Cross branches and local ICRC staff.


New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- ICRC Update 98/09 on the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in response to the crisis in Kosovo, dated 19.11.98

During the weekend of 28 - 29 November 1998, for all information please call the press officer on duty Corinne Adam, on (mobile) 41 79 202 36 80
ICRC NEWS

YUGOSLAVIA/KOSOVO

ICRC STEPS UP FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Working in close cooperation with the World Food Programme, the ICRC has pinpointed the areas where people need more assistance and has begun to provide additional food for various distribution centres throughout Kosovo. On 30 November six trucks coming from Belgrade loaded with 60 tonnes of wheat flour, vegetable oil, sugar, salt, yeast and pasta reached Glogovac in central Kosovo. Further convoys will bring 90 tonnes of food to Srbica and Kosovska Mitrovica (centre and north) this week. The assistance is meant to supplement regular ICRC relief operations in the field. From 1 to 26 November over 260 tonnes of food and thousands of blankets, shoes, clothing articles, hygiene items and baby kits were delivered to various towns and villages in the Pec, Prizren, Pristina and Drenica regions.

A total of 21 ICRC expatriates and 99 local staff members are currently engaged in medical, detention, tracing, relief and water and sanitation operations in Kosovo.

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Amanda Williamson, ICRC Geneva, tel: ++ 4122 730 2678

RWANDA

CHILDREN REUNITED WITH RELATIVES THANKS TO PHOTO-TRACING PROGRAMME

His nickname is "Bitama", which means "chubby baby" in Kinyarwanda. When he was first seen by ICRC delegates in 1997 he was unable to tell them who his parents were. He had been repatriated alone, no one had claimed him, and all he could remember was his nickname.

Nonetheless, on 27 November the ICRC was able to reunite him with his grandmother, who had recognized his picture in an album containing photographs of countless other young children and had provided ICRC delegates with personal details that proved he really was her grandson. According to his grandmother, Bitama was born in 1992 in Masaka, near Kigali, and both his parents were dead.
Bitama was the 700th child to be reunited with a relative under a photo-tracing programme launched in May 1997 in cooperation with UNICEF. Three albums containing a total of 1,655 photographs of young children have been published so far, and 10,000 copies of each have been distributed throughout the country to associations and local authorities which display the photos where the public can easily see them. The photo-tracing concept was developed for children who are either too young or too traumatized to provide the information needed to start up normal reunification proceedings.

The ICRC is continuing to search for the relatives of some 5,200 other children who are currently being looked after by host families or orphanages. Since 1994 more than 48,000 unaccompanied children have been reunited with at least one of their relatives in Rwanda.

Further information: Graziella de Vecchi, ICRC Kigali, tel: ++250 72 344

TOGO
THE RED CROSS AT SCHOOL

One month ago two Togolese primary schools started teaching the basic principles of the Red Cross, international humanitarian law and first aid to pupils between the ages of 7 and 13. The schools of Atti-Touwi and Tovégan, situated 70 kilometres north-west of the capital, Lomé, are part of a pilot project launched by the Togolese Red Cross and the ICRC under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

The purpose of the project is to integrate these new subjects into the existing primary school curriculum. After attending an academic workshop that lasted several days, teachers from both schools adapted booklets provided by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to meet their particular needs.

"It is essential for children to familiarize themselves with the principles of tolerance and solidarity from a very young age", said René Parkoo, headmaster of the school in Atti-Touwi. As a first step, basic Red Cross concepts and rules of international humanitarian law are being taught in civics and ethics courses, where children learn, for example, that vulnerable people are entitled to assistance. First-aid activities in case of floods or drought will be covered in geography lessons.

The Togolese Red Cross has drawn on experience gained in Tunisia, Senegal and Conakry, Guinea, where similar programmes have been conducted. It plans to extend the project to other primary schools in the country.

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Dominique Seshie, ICRC Lomé, tel: ++228 21 55 28
ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES
ONE YEAR LATER: ICRC RENEWS CALL FOR RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OTTAWA TREATY

It has now been a year since the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction was signed by 123 States in Ottawa, Canada. The number of ratifications (40) needed to bring the treaty into force was reached on 16 September 1998, in record time for an arms-related treaty. Yet landmines will continue to cause untold suffering until the treaty becomes universal and is implemented on the ground.

The ICRC once again calls on all States which have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the treaty without delay. It also urges States which have not yet done so to adhere to amended Protocol II to the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This protocol restricts the use of anti-personnel mines for States that continue to employ them, as well as that of anti-vehicle mines, booby traps and other explosive devices which are not covered by the Ottawa treaty and have a severe impact on civilians. Amended Protocol II, to which 27 States are now party, enters into force on 3 December.

While welcoming the speed at which the Ottawa treaty has been ratified, ICRC President Cornelia Sommaruga stressed that "landmines pay no attention to treaties". "It is only when States fulfil their obligation to clear mines, destroy stockpiles and assist victims that the treaty will begin to save lives", said Mr Sommaruga, who pointed out that the real challenge was to mobilize the resources needed to implement the Ottawa treaty at national and international levels. "The tragic lesson to be drawn from the recent floods in Central America is that mines can go on maiming years after they have been laid", said the ICRC President. "They can also travel to areas many kilometres away. Every day counts."

A total of 131 States have now signed the treaty and 55 have ratified it. The treaty will enter into force on 1 March 1999 for the 40 States that ratified it by 16 September and six months after ratification for other States. Once the treaty has entered into force, States will have four years to destroy existing stockpiles, which 11 States have already done, and 10 years to clear all mines from the ground. The first meeting of States Parties is to be held in May 1999, in Maputo, Mozambique.

Having set up three new prosthetic/orthotic centres in mine-infested countries in 1998, the ICRC now operates 22 such facilities in 11 countries - Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Rwanda, Tajikistan and Uganda. The ICRC also conducts mine-awareness programmes in Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, teaching people living near mined areas how to avoid life-shattering accidents.

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ANGOLA

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

On 3 December ICRC delegates distributed emergency assistance in the form of plastic sheeting, mattresses, blankets, jerrycans, kitchen sets and soap to 700 displaced families who have found refuge in the municipality of Cuvelai, in the southern Angolan province of Cunene. With logistic support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Angolan Red Cross, the supplies were flown to Ondjiva, the provincial capital, and then trucked to the distribution point.

Most of these 3,000 displaced people are farmers from the north-eastern part of the province who have fled the hazardous security conditions there over the past three months.

The ICRC team then did the rounds of the poorer quarters of Cuvelai to provide soap to elderly people and to patients at the local health post, who had not been able to make their way to the distribution point.

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SRI LANKA

ICRC AID FOR THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE

Following the fighting between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) that took place on 3 December around Oddusuddan in the northern Vanni region, the ICRC distributed non-food aid to some of the 12,000 civilians who had fled to the town of Puthukkudiyiruppu.

After liaising with the local NGO consortium and the Assistant Government Agent on the spot, the ICRC visited all the places where the displaced families are currently housed to assess their living conditions. Delegates subsequently supplied 2,000 people with plastic sheeting, coir rope, kitchen sets, plastic basins, buckets and soap. Local NGOs provided the displaced civilians with basic foodstuffs and cooked meals for three days, thanks to the Sri Lankan government's emergency food assistance fund.
About half of the displaced found shelter with relatives and friends, and the rest have been accommodated in ten school buildings in Puthukkudiyiruppu.

Since 1983, the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE has claimed the lives of more than 50,000 people, and over 300,000 remain displaced.

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AFGHANISTAN
ICRC MISSIONS TO BAMIYAN

In November ICRC delegates went on three occasions to Bamiyan in order to make contact with the Taliban authorities and assess the living conditions of people affected by the fighting. Bamiyan was captured by Taliban troops on 12 September, but the ICRC had to wait one and a half months for authorization to go to the town.

The ICRC team visited the prison and other places of detention, which were almost empty. The prisoners had been transferred to Kandahar and Herat, and were visited there.

In the Bamiyan bazaar, half of the 400 stalls were open. Residents are gradually returning from the surrounding mountains where they had sought refuge from the fighting.

8,000 DETAINIRES VISITED BY ICRC IN 1998

The ICRC has visited almost 8,000 detainees in Afghanistan since the beginning of the year. The latest series of visits are currently being completed in Panshir, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, Shibirghan and Herat.

To mark the month of Ramadan, 118 people held at the Pul-i-Charki prison in Kabul were freed on 5 December. After their release they went to the ICRC delegation in the city to talk to the staff.

The ICRC normally gives released detainees financial assistance to enable them to return to their homes, but such aid was not necessary in this case because each detainee received a travel allowance of 100,000 Afghanis (3 US dollars) from the Taliban. Most of the people concerned are elderly men from the provinces north of the capital.

Other prisoners are expected to be released throughout Afghanistan during the coming weeks, as is customary during Ramadan.

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PHILIPPINES - MINDANAO

VICTIMS OF FIGHTING IN MAGUINDANAO RECEIVE RELIEF

At the end of November the ICRC and the Philippine National Red Cross distributed aid to some 2,000 displaced persons in the Maguindanao area of Mindanao. The displaced had fled their homes in the Muslim part of the island following violent clashes that took place from 24 to 26 November. More than 350 especially needy families received food and plastic sheeting to build shelters.

The fighting between the Philippine army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) resumed despite the signing of a cease-fire agreement on 25 October. Owing to the upsurge in hostilities between government forces and the MILF over the last two years, the ICRC has increased its presence and stepped up its activities on Mindanao.

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MOROCCO / WESTERN SAHARA

ICRC VISITS MOROCCAN PRISONERS HELD BY POLISARIO FRONT

An ICRC team including a medical doctor visited 1,080 Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front near Tindouf, Algeria, between 2 and 8 December. The delegates also saw the 84 prisoners released in April 1997 who are still awaiting repatriation to Morocco. All prisoners are visited by the ICRC once a year. Delegates visited 649 other prisoners last May.

Each prisoner was given an opportunity to send a Red Cross message and photographs to his family. The ICRC team brought with it a supply of insulin and plans to provide other medical supplies and to distribute hygiene items to the prisoners in the near future.

The ICRC is extremely concerned about the situation of these men, most of whom were captured between 1978 and 1982 and have therefore been held now for over 15 years. The organization is stepping up representations to the parties concerned in order to bring about a humanitarian solution as soon as possible. It remains available to supervise the repatriation of all prisoners held in connection with the Western Sahara conflict.

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AFGHANISTAN

WINTER RELIEF IN KABUL

As in previous years, the ICRC has set up a programme to assist part of the population of Kabul during what promises to be a harsh winter. Warm clothing, plastic sheeting and coal will be distributed to almost 3,200 people living in 540 households headed by widows and eligible for ICRC assistance, as well as to 120 families with paraplegic breadwinners. The Afghan Red Crescent Society will assist 2,500 other families by providing them with the same basic essentials. The ICRC both furnishes these supplies and monitors their distribution. Furthermore, food rations are provided throughout the year to more than 22,000 particularly vulnerable families.

In addition, some 3,300 girls and boys, including 570 orphans, will receive shoes and other clothing.
Four Afghan non-governmental organizations have been selected to manufacture shoes and eiderdowns intended for the ICRC's beneficiaries. This provides two months of employment for more than 1,000 women.

**AID FOR VICTIMS OF ROCKET ATTACK ON KABUL**

After several rockets fell on a densely populated residential area of Kabul on 13 December, the ICRC took 10 wounded people to the ICRC-supported Wazir Akbar Khan hospital. Many others were treated at other health-care facilities. While some of the injured were fit to be discharged later the same day, those more seriously injured remain in hospital.

The attack was the most severe to hit Kabul since 21 September, when two rockets killed around 100 people.

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**INDONESIA / EAST TIMOR**

**TRAINING IN HUMANITARIAN LAW**

The ICRC held a series of workshops on international humanitarian law from 1 to 9 December for 200 senior Indonesian armed forces officers stationed in East Timor. The focus was on the proportionate use of force and the obligation of all those engaged in armed conflict to abide by the principles of the law. The participants also heard talks on the ICRC's mandate and the role played by the organization in East Timor.

The ICRC has been present since 1974 in East Timor, where its work consists mainly of efforts to ensure that the civilian population is spared the effects of the conflict. It also monitors conditions of detention and seeks to restore contact between members of families separated by the fighting. In conjunction with the Indonesian Red Cross Society, the ICRC is also carrying out a public health programme to provide remote villages with safe water.

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**ICRC**

**1999 BUDGET EXCEEDS 600 MILLION SWISS FRANCS**

Representatives of the diplomatic missions in Geneva gathered on 14 December for the yearly budget-appeal presentation at ICRC headquarters. President Cornelio Sommaruga focused on the organization's new strategies, which consist of some 130 measures – resulting from the *Avenir* project – to be implemented over the next three years.
These changes reflect the need to adapt to new conflict situations and to adopt an approach to war victims that takes into account factors such as the rekindling of old conflicts, the unpredictable nature of new wars, the involvement of foreign armies in internal conflicts and the emergence of social and economic problems that feed violence and crime.

President Sommaruga also stressed the failure to respect international humanitarian law and the ICRC's mandate, rendering access to the victims increasingly difficult. Despite these difficulties, the number of people being aided by the ICRC did not decline in 1998 and operational costs remained stable.

On a more positive note, end-of-year accounts should balance despite a deficit of some 25 million Swiss francs as 1998 began. Headquarters and field operations are receiving support in cash, in kind and in services from the following sources: governments and the European Commission, 87%; National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 9.5%; private funds and public funds from sources other than national governments, 3.5%. Next year the ICRC will introduce a new planning system in which objectives will be set on the basis of results achieved and on groups whom the ICRC still seeks to assist, not on the programmes themselves. This new approach should make it possible to better pinpoint victims' needs and to take account of assessments made of situations in which the ICRC works. The 1999 budget has been set at 660,169,000 Swiss francs, slightly less than this year's.

In addition, the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent will require support from the entire international community in 1999.

Finally, President Sommaruga presented the book *Hard Choices – Moral dilemmas in humanitarian intervention*, published in New York by Rowman & Littlefield. Produced under ICRC auspices, the work is a collection of essays by 16 authors of international renown on humanitarian action and the choices and dilemmas in moral terms that must be faced. The aim of the work is to provide food for thought regarding this complex subject and to heighten the sense of responsibility of leading players in the humanitarian sphere.

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REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

RENEWED FIGHTING IN BRAZZAVILLE

The ICRC team in Brazzaville, which comprises 63 Congolese and seven expatriate staff, is closely monitoring the humanitarian situation following the renewed outbreak of fighting in the Pool region and parts of the capital. Scores of inhabitants have left their homes and are once again seeking safety and shelter. Some have fled the city to join relatives, while others have gathered in centres opened to accommodate the displaced. The ICRC is providing the health posts in these centres with medicines and water.

On 21 December, the ICRC flew in two loads of urgently needed medical supplies. These include hospital kits and sets of sutures and other dressing materials to treat the wounded who have been arriving in Brazzaville's hospitals. Volunteers of the Congolese Red Cross, working with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which has 12 Congolese staff and two expatriates on the spot, are providing first aid and transporting the wounded to hospital.

The ICRC has managed to ensure that all stocks, including those of other humanitarian organizations that have temporarily left the capital, are available for distribution by Red Cross personnel as needed.

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NEPAL

ICRC STARTS VISITING DETAINEES

The ICRC has begun visiting security detainees arrested in connection with the internal disturbances in certain parts of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal.

Visits were conducted between 1 and 16 December in three jails in the Himalayan foothills, in one of the poorest midwestern regions of Nepal. The ICRC registered a total of 99 detainees in Rolpa District Jail in Liwange, Rukum District Jail in Musikot and Dang District Jail in Gorahi, where road conditions are difficult and telecommunications almost nonexistent. Over the coming year, it expects to visit an additional 20 to 30 places of detention.

Following acceptance of an offer of services made by the ICRC to the Nepalese Government on 10 August, the visits were carried out in full compliance with the organization's standard working procedures (which include unimpeded access for ICRC delegates to all places of detention, direct one-on-one meetings with detainees and the possibility of repeating visits according to a timetable drawn up by the ICRC), and with the full cooperation of the Home Ministry in Kathmandu as well as the local administration, the police and jail authorities in the districts involved.
These visits will be followed up by comprehensive reporting to the relevant authorities on the detainees' conditions of detention and treatment.

In the region, the ICRC has also been visiting security detainees in Bhutan since 1992 and in India's Jammu and Kashmir since 1994.

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YUGOSLAVIA/KOSOVO

SUPPORT FOR TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

"We have emerged from the most acute emergency phase and now are trying to help communities in Kosovo to cope with some of the direct effects of the tragic events that occurred last summer", explained ICRC delegate John Roche, who is in charge of coordinating relief activities in the area. "At present, several of our programmes now provide support for existing medical and paramedical facilities so that services can continue functioning as smoothly as possible."

In the town of Pristina, the reception centre for people seriously traumatized by the violence is caring for some 30 children aged between five and twelve. The two Kosovar psychologists working there are treating their young patients through role-playing and dialogue and above all are listening to what they have to say. The ICRC has supplied the centre with food, clothes, toys, crayons and drawing paper. It subsequently plans to install additional showers and washing machines, and will deliver wood for heating. The centre must be able to operate under the best possible conditions if the youngsters are to recover their equilibrium.

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KENYA

FIRST IHL COURSE OF ITS KIND IN EAST AFRICA

In early December 21 university professors, lecturers, scholars and scientists from Kenya, Tanzania and southern Sudan took part in a "training for trainers" workshop on international humanitarian law (IHL), organized in the Kenyan town of Nakuru by the local Egerton University and the ICRC.

The principal aims of the workshop were to promote the transfer of knowledge of IHL and to undertake a critical examination of methods for teaching the course Society and International Humanitarian Law. This compulsory core course will be offered by the Egerton University Faculty of Arts and Sciences during the second semester of the 1999/2000 academic year.

The 45-hour syllabus was developed by the university's Sociology Department together with the ICRC. It was approved by the university authorities early this month and will initially target some 1,380 first-year undergraduates.
The course has also been incorporated in a new military studies programme recently designed by the Kenyan Department of Defence and Egerton University for Kenyan armed forces personnel. Teaching is to begin on 4 January 1999.

The Egerton University course is the result of a key resolution adopted last June at a previous seminar on IHL instruction in Kenyan universities organized at the initiative of the ICRC regional delegation in Nairobi.

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New on the ICRC Public Server - http://www.icrc.org:
- ICRC Update 98/10 on the activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in response to the crisis in Kosovo, dated 22.12.98
- Update No 98/01 on ICRC activities in Angola, dated 23.12.98

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