The Near East

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): **- (1949)**

PDF erstellt am: **28.04.2024**

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He distributed gifts provided by various relief organizations — in all, 11,228 kilos of clothing, underwear, blankets and other supplies, to a total value of 45,920 Swiss francs. To this must be added relief given by the ICRC itself in the form of powdered milk, and medical stores supplied on the basis of requests made. The total value of relief thus distributed during the year amounted to 155,237 Swiss francs. [1]

Visits made in Spring showed that conditions for persons detained in the Islands — especially Makronissos — which had been satisfactory up to then, had become difficult. The ICRC addressed an urgent appeal to donors who had already contributed to relief work in Greece, asking them especially to collect clothing, new or part-worn. The Committee provided from its own resources a sum of 280,000 Swiss francs, [1] allowing the dispatch to its Delegation of 5000 blankets, twelve tons of powdered milk, ten tons of rice, twenty tons of soap and 2000 working suits, in addition to medical supplies, tonic foods, vitamins and bandages. This programme was put into effect from October on.

II. — The Near East

In addition to its traditional work, the Committee, under the Agreement of December 16, 1948, with the United Nations Organization, took part in assisting Palestine refugees. [2]

A detailed account of ICRC aid to Palestine refugees would be outside the scope of this Report. We propose to give here only a brief account under certain headings. Readers of the *Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge* will have already, month by month during 1949, learned about the progress of the scheme in general, and some of its more interesting aspects. [3]

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[1] See General Income and Expenditure Account, " Relief Actions ", p. 18.

[2] See *Report 1947-1948*, p. 115.

[3] See especially : January, p. 1 ; March, p. 211 ; April, pp. 265, 271, 307 ; May, p. 328 ; June, pp. 412, 415 ; October, p. 776 ; December, p. 977.

The advance of Israeli forces in the Negev, from October 1948 on, brought the front close to the Egyptian border at the beginning of 1949. The important town of Faluja, held by an Egyptian garrison, was cut off and besieged. The Committee's Delegates at Gaza and Tel-Aviv drew up a plan for removing the wounded to Jaffa, but were unable to put it into effect. The ICRC was then allowed to make contact with the besieged and provide them with medical supplies. Freed by the armistice between Egypt and Israel, at the end of February, 1949, the Egyptian troops spontaneously handed over their Israeli prisoners before crossing back into Egypt.

While hostilities continued, the Committee's Delegates in Egypt, Israel, the Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan [1] visited Arab and Israeli prisoner of war camps. They took steps to obtain the improvements necessary to bring conditions into line with the requirements of the 1929 Prisoners of War Convention.

In January, 1949, the Committee set up a Mixed Medical Commission, comprising two of its own doctors and one from the Detaining Power, to secure repatriation of the gravely ill and wounded. In Mafrag Camp, in Transjordan, the Commission had seventy-six men and six children put on the list for repatriation.

In March, 1949, the ICRC supervised an exchange of prisoners agreed upon after the armistice between the Arab States and Israel. On March 6, 7 and 8, 144 Israeli prisoners were repatriated from Abbasieh Camp in Egypt ; at the same time, Egyptian prisoners held in Israel were returned.

An exchange of Israeli against Transjordan, Iraki, and Palestine prisoners was made at the beginning of March. At the end of the month, thirty-five Lebanese prisoners were exchanged against seven Israeli soldiers and civilians held by the Lebanese.

This ended the repatriation of prisoners. According to ICRC figures, there had been 850 Israeli prisoners held by

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[1] Styled " Jordan " as from April, 1950.

Egypt, the Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan, at the beginning of the year, and 3000 Arabs in Israeli hands.

Although the need gradually lessened as hostilities died down, the exchange of civilian messages and the system of enquiries, begun in 1948, continued to prove useful. [1]

Relief to the Jerusalem Poor

We shall see later the part taken by the ICRC in the United Nations Relief to Palestine Refugees (UNRPR).

Apart from this, the ICRC provided from its own resources [2] and from gifts made available by the National Societies and other donors, relief for war victims other than refugees, especially for the poor of Jerusalem.

The situation in Jerusalem was particularly critical. To the number of local poor were added several thousand persons who had lost their occupations after the city had been divided between Arabs and Jews. The poor were almost as numerous as the refugees, but were excluded as ineligible by the terms of reference of UNRPR. Following M. Ruegger's visit to Palestine [3], the ICRC decided to assist them and set up an Office, Dispensary and Milk Centre in the Old Town. The Delegate at Beirut purchased supplies, and a first distribution was made on April 27, 1949. Fortnightly issues were then made regularly, giving aid to some 15,000 persons.

The following supplies were distributed during 1949 to the poor of Jerusalem :

Wheat	730 tons
Sugar	44
Oil	39
Rice	33
Lentils	21
Dried raisins and figs, nuts and macaroni	18
Oatmeal	17
Beans	10
Peas	6
Clothing and footwear	35

[1] See *Report 1947-1948*, p. 111.

[2] See General Income and Expenditure Account, "Relief Actions", p. 18.

[3] See above, p. 28.

Funds were provided as follows :

The ICRC [1]	294,422	Swiss francs
Jewish Society for Human Service	166,660	
Canadian Red Cross	22,290	
Australian Red Cross	19,084	
Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran	12,149	
Cadbury Trust, England	8,676	
D. M. Robinson Esq., Wakefield, England	868	
Swiss Red Cross	6,205	
	530,354	Swiss francs

Apart from Jerusalem, relief was given through the Delegations at Tel-Aviv, Ramallah and Gaza in Israeli and Palestine territory. When the Gaza Delegation was closed in April, part of the supplies in hand was made over to the American Friends Service Committee, which became responsible for South Palestine under the United Nations relief plan.

Relief thus provided by the ICRC in Palestine and Israel during 1949, was valued at about 1,606,000 Swiss francs—390,000 francs for food and clothing, and the balance in medical relief.

Aid to Palestine Refugees

Under the UNRPR scheme, the ICRC was allotted the territory where fighting principally took place (Central and North Palestine, and Israeli territory) ; the League was given the countries bordering Palestine ; and the American Friends Service Committee the Southern part of the territory.

The ICRC Commissariat set up was placed under the direction of M. Alfred Escher, First Counsellor of the Swiss Legation in London, who was freed of all other duties by the Swiss Diplomatic Service.

Staff, at the end of December 1949, included 92 Swiss Delegates, Doctors and Nurses, two Danish Nurses, and 3395 employees taken on locally. [2] Headquarters were in Beirut, with the following representation :

[1] See General Income and Expenditure Account, " Relief Actions ", p. 18.

[2] See below, p. 83.

(a) — In Arab territory, by permanent or provisional regional Delegations in Jericho, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus, each area having a Director who was assisted by Delegates, Doctors and Nurses ;

(b) — In Israeli territory, by a Delegation in Haifa, under a regional Director, assisted by three Delegates ; and in the part of Jerusalem occupied by the Israeli forces, by one Delegate.

The Reports of the ICRC Commissariat give interesting information about the number of refugees, the nature of the supplies and the sums placed at the disposal of the ICRC.

Before examining these figures, which afford a good summary of the work, we may recall that relief was delivered almost in its entirety to Beirut by UNRPR. The ICRC Commissariat set up in Beirut an office to check the delivery and storage of the goods ; these were forwarded by road, across two frontiers, to Arab Palestine, and by sea to Israel.

Regional representatives arranged for storage, and made issues on the basis of the figures in their possession for refugees —starting off with estimates that could not be checked. The Delegates met great difficulties ; these they tried to overcome by first principles—the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross.

On December 7, 1948, Sir R. Cilento, then Director of UNRPR, stated that there were approximately 760,000 refugees. He estimated that about 300,000 (i.e. two-fifths of the whole) were in the ICRC sector.

The actual number proved much higher. It was 476,850 at the end of May 1949, and continued afterwards in or around this figure, which was made up as shown on page 77.

As the United Nations had worked on lower figures, rations were always insufficient. In April, for example, 113,000, or roughly 25%, were wanting. The size of rations had to be correspondingly reduced.

In February, 1949, the Director of UNRPR had warned the three distributing agencies against unwarranted claims for relief. He defined a refugee, generally speaking, as a person who had fled as a result of events and the consequences of the war, who was really destitute, and who had lost his means of

Month	Jericho	Ramallah	Nablus	Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Hebron	Israel	Total
January	30,000	57,000	120,000	30,000	15,000	40,000	47,000	339,000
February	65,500	72,000	128,500	26,000	28,000	52,000	47,000	419,000
March	65,500	72,000	127,700	26,000	32,000	52,000	47,000	422,200
April	72,800	72,000	127,700	26,000	32,000	77,500	47,000	455,000
May	72,400	72,000	127,700	28,400	38,000	91,350	47,000	476,850
June	48,062	81,000	124,855	33,000	53,770	88,000	45,906	474,093
July	48,721	81,000	128,000	35,152	55,518	87,768	47,521	484,680
August	48,432	70,000	127,489	36,484	56,400	89,000	49,338	477,143
September ...	47,978	70,000	126,300	35,440	55,050	89,980	48,513	473,261
October	40,483	69,658	126,330	35,440	55,050	82,549	48,732	458,242
November	39,755	70,514	124,834	34,814	48,289	84,338	49,132	451,676
December ...	39,001	73,724	124,834	39,418	48,258	81,904	50,257	457,376

support. Strict control, however, proved extremely difficult in practice. Logically, nomads and the village poor should have been excluded, as being the responsibility of local authorities. It was humanly and humanely impossible, when faced by wholly indigent applicants, to distinguish in actual fact between genuine refugees and others. In one village near the combat zone, inhabitants had to be accepted as refugees ; the local military commander threatened otherwise to move them elsewhere and so qualify them under the United Nations definition.

Some of the nomads had really lost their flocks and pastures ; others, who had not the same losses to bear, nevertheless succeeded in having themselves included amongst those granted assistance.

The Commissioner believed that some of the refugees, having salvaged part of their possessions when they fled, did not at first claim. Gradually, their reserves exhausted, they were forced to do so. In short, the number of the poverty-stricken increased unceasingly in a country where economic life was dead. [1]

Attempts, with UNRPR support, to make the figures realistic and eliminate those not entitled, led to the striking

[1] See *Report of the ICRC Commissioner for the period January 1-May 31, 1949*, p. 24.

off of 24,000 to 30,000 names; these reductions were more than offset, however, by the arrival of a further 60,000 refugees from Israeli territory.

Of the average 450,000 refugees in the ICRC sector, 40% were children—a proportion which, because of the high birth-rate, tended to increase. Expectant and nursing mothers represented 10% of all refugees.

These figures emphasize the importance of relief given by UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), which provided almost all the balance of foods not donated by UNRPR.

The basic allocations to the ICRC Commissariat are summarized as follows:

Table No. 1

ALLOCATIONS BY UNRPR

(Tons)

Basic Goods	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
Flour	2,165	2,255	2,900	3,684	3,669	4.398
Pulses	240	250	249	332	332	210
Oil	140	150	58.5	79	75.5	54.5
Sugar	—	100	64.5	87	87	84
Dates	425	200	205	267	213	—
Tinned Fish	—	—	112	146	173	—
Potatoes	—	—	—	—	—	—
Onions	—	—	—	—	—	—

Basic Goods	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Flour	4,200	3,779	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200
Pulses	210	210	210	210	270	227
Oil	54.5	54.5	54.5	109	109	109
Sugar	84	84	84	84	84	84
Dates	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tinned Fish	—	—	—	—	—	—
Potatoes	—	—	142	—	—	—
Onions	—	170	—	170	39	170

To the basic allocations, UNRPR added various supplements:

Table No. 2

SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOCATIONS

T. = Tons M. = Metres P = Pieces

Articles	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Blankets	48,500 P.	29,600 P.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	68,272 P.	39,883 P.	9,638 P.
Sleeping Bags	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8,432 P.	—	—
Tents	150 P.	560 P.	—	250 P.	—	587 P.	850 P.	392 P.	2,565 P.	681 P.	1,276 P.	28 P.
Dried Beans	—	15 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dried Figs	—	—	20 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dates	—	—	118 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haricots	—	—	5.5 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cod Liver Oil	—	—	—	15 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Soap	—	—	—	13 T.	—	—	10 T.	—	—	11 T.	20 T.	21.5 T.
Flake Meal	—	—	—	—	—	144 T.	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tinned Fish and Meat	—	—	—	—	—	—	132 T.	4.6 T.	50 T.	—	—	—
Petrol for Cooking	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	97 T.	—	—	—
Cotton Fabric	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7.3 T.	—	—	5,000 M.	169,206 M.
Buttons, Thread, etc.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.6 T.
Sundries	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15 T.

Allocations by UNICEF are shown below:

Table No. 3

ALLOCATIONS BY UNICEF

(in Tons)

Goods	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Full Milk (powdered)	—	22.5	22.5	24.75	24.75	47.7	—	—	—	25	—	—
Condensed Milk (unsweetened)...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	96.9	—	89.65	—
Skim Milk (powdered)	—	192	192	211.2	211.2	154	90	360.8	62	189.7	—	223.3
Sugar	—	48	48	—	48	—	116	—	25	63	24.96	54.4
Margarine.....	—	50	50	52.8	52.8	—	28	103.4	55.4	58.5	28.24	59.2
Tinned Meat.....	—	50	50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rice	—	—	—	—	—	235	—	632	—	195	33	195
Dried Fruits.....	—	—	—	—	—	38.6	—	—	29.9	—	—	—
Soap.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	47.5	—
Cod Liver Oil.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	44

The Commissariat further received, in cash and kind, what is set out in the two following tables :

Table No. 4

MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS

(received by ICRC)

Donor	Amount		Object
UNICEF Beirut	£ Leb.	14,865.50	Milk distribution
American Red Cross, Beirut (Junior Red Cross Fund)	"	17,150	Baby foods
do	"	9,429	do
UNESCO Paris	"	6,000	Jericho Schools
do	"	44,200	Refugee Schools
do	£ Pal.	1,162	Jerusalem Schools
do	"	540	do
Jewish Society for Human Service	"	2,522	Jericho Camps
British Red Cross	"	249,375	Sundry Relief
do	"	10,333	do
do	"	253,225	do
H. M. King Abdullah	"	50	Hebron Refugees
Public Health Dept.	"	600	ICRC Hospital, Hebron
Lutheran World Federation	"	1,545	ICRC (Augusta Victoria) Hospital
Reserve Field Director, UNRPR	£ Leb.	19,155	For waterproofing and repairing tents

Table No. 5

Relief in Kind

(received by ICRC)

Donor	Weight (Tons)	Pieces	Kind
American Red Cross	44		Sundries
do		4,440	Blankets
do	17		Underclothing and layettes
do	16.5		Books, pencils, toys
do	3.5		Feeding-bottles
Danish Red Cross	30		Sundries
do	30		Salted fish
Swedish Red Cross	30		Sundries
do		250	Tents
do	16.5		Part-worn clothing
Canadian Red Cross	159		Sundries
Turkish Government		500	Tents
ICRC		2,100	Sleeping-bags
Belgian Red Cross	0.5		Sundries
Indian Red Cross	1.3		do
Liechtenstein Red Cross	0.9		do
Finnish Red Cross	0.9		Tinned meat
South African Red Cross	0.7		Foodstuffs
UNESCO	2		School material
Jewish Society for Human Service	0.5		Sundries
do	3.5		Part-worn clothing and shoes
Church World Service	15.4		Sundries
do	1		Foodstuffs
Mission belge " Palestine "	18.4		Sundries
Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad	4.2		do
do	4.2		Powdered milk

In spite of the respectable total of these figures, the Commissioner estimated that individual rations represented no more than 1200 calories—an eloquent commentary on the depressed standard of living of those dependent wholly on international charity. The figure of 1200 calories may be compared with those indicated by Professor Vannotti, of Lausanne University, member of the ICRC, who, at the beginning of the Committee's work in Palestine, had been asked to examine the medical implications :

Requirements in Calories for Refugees

Normal activity	2,500
Reduced activity	1,800-2,000
Minimum for a limited period (one to three weeks), except in special cases, e.g. heavy manual work, pregnant women	1,500

Medical Assistance — The paucity of available food underlined the value of the medical assistance given by the ICRC.

Certain grave diseases being endemic, the presence of masses of refugees, isolated, assembled in camps, or wandering in search of better shelter, offered a constant menace of epidemics. Hygiene was uniformly bad or lacking altogether, and as infectious patients could not be isolated, preventive measures became vital.

By 1949, the means available to the Commissariat had noticeably improved. For medical work alone, there was a staff of 394 (40 from Switzerland, two from the Danish Red Cross, 352 engaged locally). Directed by Dr. René Sansonnens, this corps included thirty doctors.

Work in the beginning was arduous in the extreme. Everything had to be created. Inevitable delays, primitive working conditions, differences of national character, were enough to test the best-willed. Gradually, however, the campaign was developed in Arab Palestine, spreading later, in agreement with Israel, to Northern Galilee.

Clinics — A first care was to complete the system of clinics already set up in certain of the camps, and in Jericho, Bethlehem,

Tulkarem, Djenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron and Jalazone. Mobile clinics served districts within a given radius of these centres. From January to May, 1949, the number of daily consultations rose from 700 to 2100, and afterwards remained steady around this figure.

Hospitals — The Commissariat took over several hospitals, including one at Hebron (60 beds) and two in Jerusalem—Bethany (48 beds) and Augusta Victoria (280 beds). The Augusta Victoria Hospital was completely re-equipped, and given a tuberculosis service ; it also became a central store for medical supplies.

Other accommodation was reserved for refugees in private hospitals—generally against payment in kind, e.g. the Austrian Hospital at Jerusalem, which put 93 beds at the disposal of refugees. A Maternity Home and several Child Welfare Centres were also set up.

Laboratories — The absence of laboratories in Palestine impeded medical work for a long time. Eventually, ICRC installations made routine analysis possible at Nablus, Bethlehem, Bethany and Hebron, while UNICEF provided the Augusta Victoria Hospital with a complete serological and bacteriological laboratory.

Apart from purely therapeutic work, much was done to improve and protect public health. Distribution centres for milk provided by UNICEF were opened throughout the country. Half the population benefited—no small matter in a country infested with children's diseases.

Hygiene — Disinfection of camps and localities, de-lousing of refugees, and their instruction in elementary hygiene, was seen to by a Service 117 strong (inspectors and disinfecting squads). The problem of drinking water was successfully grappled. Where the construction of reservoirs was unfeasible, chemical sterilization was resorted to. Important works were carried out—piping, water-tanks, and so on.

From April to August 1949, 96 persons were employed on an anti-malaria campaign. It began with destruction of mosquitoes by DDT, in powder or spray form. Fifteen mobile teams covered the worst districts. All camps, caves or other dwelling-places were treated, 188 villages, and certain buildings in large towns, giving a grand total of 20,000 tents, 95,000 rooms and 7000 huts. More than 19 tons of DDT, in different degrees of concentration, were employed. Where methodical application was impossible, malariol was used for reservoirs. The campaign was successful in protecting a population of more than 650,000.

DDT was also used against exanthematic typhus ; about 143,000 persons were twice treated with the powder.

The destruction of flies was likewise successfully undertaken.

Vaccination — Mass vaccination was used to fight certain diseases. More than 200,000 smallpox immunisations were given, and as many against typhoid.

Tuberculosis — An effective campaign became possible on the creation of a camp for tuberculous patients. Isolation huts in the Augusta Victoria Hospital, a camp, near Jerusalem, for the families of the patients, and BCG vaccination by Danish Red Cross teams, helped to ward off the danger.

* * *

This brief summary of results shows that they were not negligible, in spite of the many difficulties—not all overcome. The Palestine refugees, fatalistic, content with little, put up with their vegetative existence, their numbers increasing all the time. The United Nations relief had to go on.

The President of the ICRC, summarizing the results of the year's work, expressed himself to this effect at Lake Success at the end of November, 1949 :

" The work of relieving the Palestine refugees, in which so many persons of goodwill have co-operated, must end in success ;

it must leave the way open, free of obstacles, for the great task of resettlement which you will have later to examine.

" In this way, a vital humanitarian work, of primordial importance to refugees in the Middle East, will have been brought fruitfully to a close. Looking beyond the present vast number of people in distress, the operation has served as a model of relief methods that may be applied again for the alleviation of suffering throughout the world."

Interest in the ICRC work in Palestine led the Swiss publishing firm, Messrs Ringier and Co., Zofingen, to send a member of its staff to report on it. The resulting account, illustrated with numerous original photographs, appeared in several international weeklies.

The ICRC Information Service produced a documentary film : " The Homeless in Palestine ", on the work of the Commissariat. The film runs for fifteen minutes, and English, French and German versions of it were made.

III. — India and Pakistan

In the Indian Peninsula, the work of the ICRC was confined almost exclusively during 1949 to dealing with the victims of the Kashmir troubles. [1]

The struggle between the two *de facto* authorities in Kashmir maintained the tension between the Indian Union, supporting the Jammu-Kashmir authorities, and Pakistan, protecting Azad-Kashmir.

The United Nations had succeeded in imposing an armistice at the beginning of 1948, but the situation continued restive. Profound divergences remained and claims on both sides were vehemently put forward. The solution of the human problems which arose was consequently slow and difficult, although Delegates met everywhere with a cordial reception.

Eighteen months after the armistice was concluded, the

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[1] See *Report 1947-1948*, p. 95.