

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross

Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross

Band: - (1957)

Rubrik: Assistance to victims of internal disturbances

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 28.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

II. ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF INTERNAL DISTURBANCES

The assistance of victims of internal disturbances is one of the most important but also one of the most delicate tasks confronting the ICRC at the present time.

As an active organisation, the International Committee must endeavour to adapt its activity to the requirements of changing circumstances, and to bring relief to victims of the unstable conditions which have prevailed since the end of the war.

In the event of unrest or disturbances, the repressive or even simply preventive measures which the State may take regarding its own nationals (rioters, rebels or perhaps merely political opponents) can have the same consequences for those to whom such measures are applied as war may bring for prisoners of war or civilian internees.

From the *humanitarian* point of view, the situation is similar to that caused by war, and it is right and proper that the International Committee should seek to assist the persons affected.

But the matter is not so clear from the legal point of view. Article 3, which is common to all four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, is the only clause providing for the good offices of the International Committee "in the case of armed conflict not of an international character". The wording implies that there must be an interpretation. It is for the States concerned to give that interpretation; and since they consider that they are acting in rightful self-defence, they naturally tend to object to any

intervention in their domestic affairs. There is therefore a risk that political detainees may be deprived of the humanitarian assistance which the Geneva Conventions guarantee to prisoners of war and civilian internees.

In order to have a basis permitting the ICRC to approach Governments and in order also to obtain permission to afford to political detainees and victims of disturbances the humanitarian assistance which they might need, the International Committee convened two Commissions of Experts, in 1953 and 1955, composed of persons well known in international affairs who were particularly well qualified both in knowledge and in experience. These experts gave an authoritative opinion concerning the conditions in which this humanitarian activity could and should be undertaken¹.

Strengthened by this opinion, and in accordance with its own traditions, the International Committee has achieved notable results in various parts of the world—thanks to the sympathetic attitude of some governments—for example in Guatemala, North Africa, Greece, Cyprus, Kenya, the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic².

Whenever ICRC delegates have been authorised to visit camps and prisons, they have confined themselves to inspecting the material conditions of detention in order to propose any improvements which may seem necessary. They have always insisted on being allowed to converse freely and without witnesses with the detainees.

Following each visit, the ICRC transmits a report to the Detaining Power containing the comments made by delegates. In order to safeguard its neutrality, and to prevent the use of its conclusions for other than humanitarian purposes, the ICRC has always refrained from making these reports public.

ALGERIA

Reference has been made in previous Annual Reports to the three missions sent by the International Committee to Algeria since 1955, in the course of which the ICRC delegates visited over

¹ See Annual Report 1955, p. 75 *et seq.*

² See Annual Report 1956, p. 42 *et seq.*

one hundred places of detention. This activity was intensified in 1957. The ICRC permanent delegate in Paris¹ maintained liaison with the French authorities and the French Red Cross, and made arrangements to enable the ICRC to carry out its task.

1. Fourth mission

In May and June, the fourth ICRC mission to Algeria was carried out². The object of this mission was to visit places of detention. The ICRC delegates visited nine prison establishments, nine assembly centres, twenty-eight screening and transit centres and two hospitals. In the assembly centres, they distributed relief supplies valued at Fr. frs. 1,500,000.

During each visit the delegates were, as customary, able to converse without witnesses with detained persons of their choice.

The delegates endeavoured to obtain the improvements in detention conditions which they considered necessary, in particular during the final interviews in Algiers with Mr. Lacoste, Resident Minister, and General Salan, Commander-in-Chief of the combined forces in Algeria. The remarks and suggestions of the ICRC mission were transmitted to the head of the French Government and to the Minister for Algerian Affairs.

2. Fifth mission

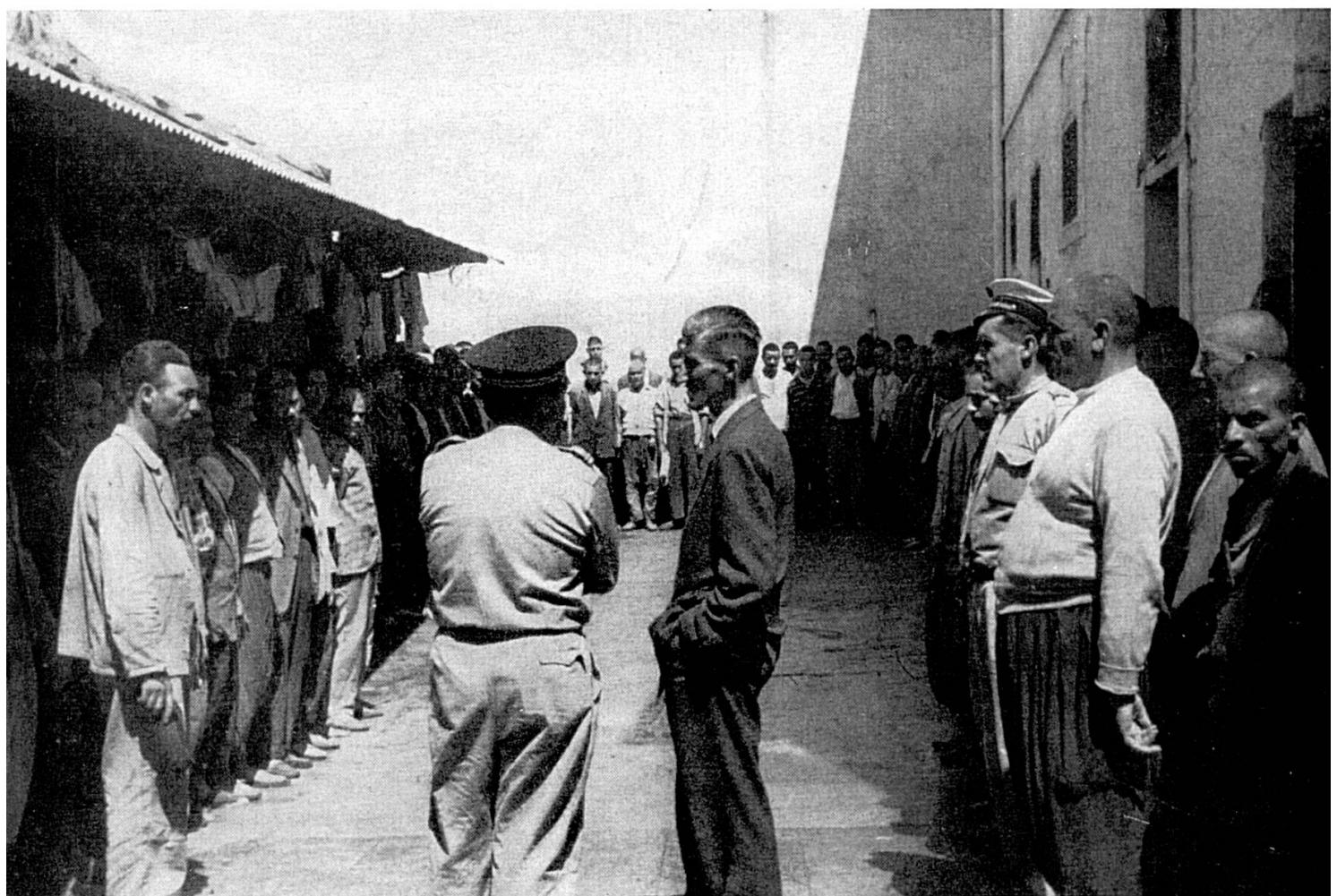
By a telegram dated November 13, the French authorities authorised the ICRC to send a fifth mission³. The visits began on November 27. By the end of December, the delegates had visited two assembly centres, forty-six screening and transit centres and six hospitals where detainees who were sick or had been wounded during the fighting were receiving treatment. The mission continued at the beginning of 1958.

Thus in 1957, the ICRC delegates made a total of 102 visits to various establishments in Algeria. They distributed relief supplies consisting of clothing and foodstuffs to civilians in the Melouza and Bordj Bou Arreridj areas who had been displaced owing to the events. These relief supplies were valued at some Fr. frs. 4,500,000.

¹ Mr. W. Michel.

² By Mr. Pierre Gaillard and Dr. Louis Gailland.

³ Mr. P. Gaillard, Dr. L. A. Gailland, assisted by Mr. R. Vust.



A delegate of the ICRC visits detainees in an Algerian prison

French prisoners in the hands of the "Front de Libération Nationale"

Throughout 1957, the ICRC continued its unremitting efforts in order to assist French prisoners who were presumed to be held by the F.L.N. (lists of names, correspondence with families, visits).

Although the discussions were encouraging, no practical results had been achieved by the end of December. It was only in early 1958 that the International Committee's efforts began to show results.

CYPRUS

Continuing the work begun in Cyprus in 1955¹, the General Delegate of the ICRC for the Middle East² made three visits to the island, with the consent of the British authorities. During these missions, which took place in March, August and November, he made eleven visits to places of detention, including three visits to the central prison at Nicosia, to the camps at Kokkino-Trimithia and Pyla, a visit to the camp at Pyror, and one to the interrogation centre at Omorphita.

On each occasion, the ICRC delegate conversed without witnesses with detainees and noted their comments. The reports prepared following each of his visits were transmitted to the appropriate authorities.

Following his August mission, the delegate was received by Sir John Harding, who was at that time Governor of Cyprus, and was able to make comments and suggestions.

After these missions, the ICRC sent to the detainees relief supplies valued at a total of Sw. Fr. 10,000.

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

In 1957, with the authorisation of the Government of the German Democratic Republic, the ICRC delegate³, accompanied by a representative of the National Red Cross Society, was able to visit three prisons and two penitentiary labour camps.

¹ See Annual Report 1955, pp. 20 and 21.

² Mr. D. de Traz.

³ Mr. H. G. Beckh.

He inspected the principal installations of these places of detention and was able to converse without witnesses with detained persons of his choice. He passed on his comments to the competent authorities who gave them all consideration.

The ICRC hopes to continue these visits in order to gain a general idea of the situation.

GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC

The Attorney General and the Ministry of Justice in Bonn, and the senior officials of the Ministries of Justice of the various "Länder" gave permission for the ICRC to visit all places of detention in the German Federal Republic.

In 1957, a delegate of the ICRC ¹, accompanied by a representative of the National Red Cross Society, visited nineteen prisons and penal institutions as well as two pentitentiary hospitals. In each case he was able to converse without witnesses with detainees of his choice. He transmitted his comments to the authorities concerned, who indicated their readiness to take them into account to the fullest extent possible.

Following the visits, the International Committee was authorised to make newspapers available to a number of detainees who had requested them.

GOA

In December 1957, an ICRC delegate ² visited Goa in order to obtain information concerning Indian detainees who had been arrested for "political crimes against the security of the State", in regard to their places of detention and the living conditions of those whose cases are still *sub judice*.

The delegate was received with understanding by the Governor General of Portuguese India. He was authorised to visit prisons and to talk without witnesses to Indian and Portuguese detainees. On the eve of his departure, he was received for a second time by the Governor, who wished to be informed in person of the facts noted by the ICRC delegate during his visits.

¹ Mr. H. G. Beckh.

² Mr. W. Michel.

The General Delegation of the Portuguese Red Cross at Goa gave Mr. Michel the warmest of welcomes during his stay and promised full assistance in all circumstances.

GREECE

The ICRC continued to give assistance to detained and exiled persons in Greece during 1957. The mission which had been interrupted in October 1956 because of the events in Hungary was resumed at the beginning of 1957. The ICRC delegate ¹ was then able to visit several places of detention and exile where he distributed clothing and medicaments with the assistance of the Greek authorities and the Greek Red Cross.

KENYA

At the beginning of 1957, the British authorities, who had been approached some time before ², gave permission for an ICRC mission to visit Kenya ³; the mission went to Kenya in March and April 1957, and visited fifty-two camps and prisons and eighteen "rehabilitation" villages.

Following the events in Kenya, the British authorities detained several thousand persons accused of participation in or sympathy for the Mau-Mau movement. Despite a policy of gradual release, 35,000 persons were still detained when the ICRC delegates visited Kenya.

As is the custom, the ICRC delegates investigated all aspects of life in the camps. They thus noted with interest that several camps contained huts of a new type, made of aluminium. Well insulated against heat and cold, easy to erect and simple to maintain, they seem well suited to the climate.

In the new villages specially built for the rehabilitation of released persons and their families, nurses and welfare workers of the British Red Cross are carrying out remarkable work on health and social problems.

¹ Mr. G. Colladon.

² See Annual Report 1956, p. 44.

³ Dr. L. A. Gailland and Mr. H. P. Junod.

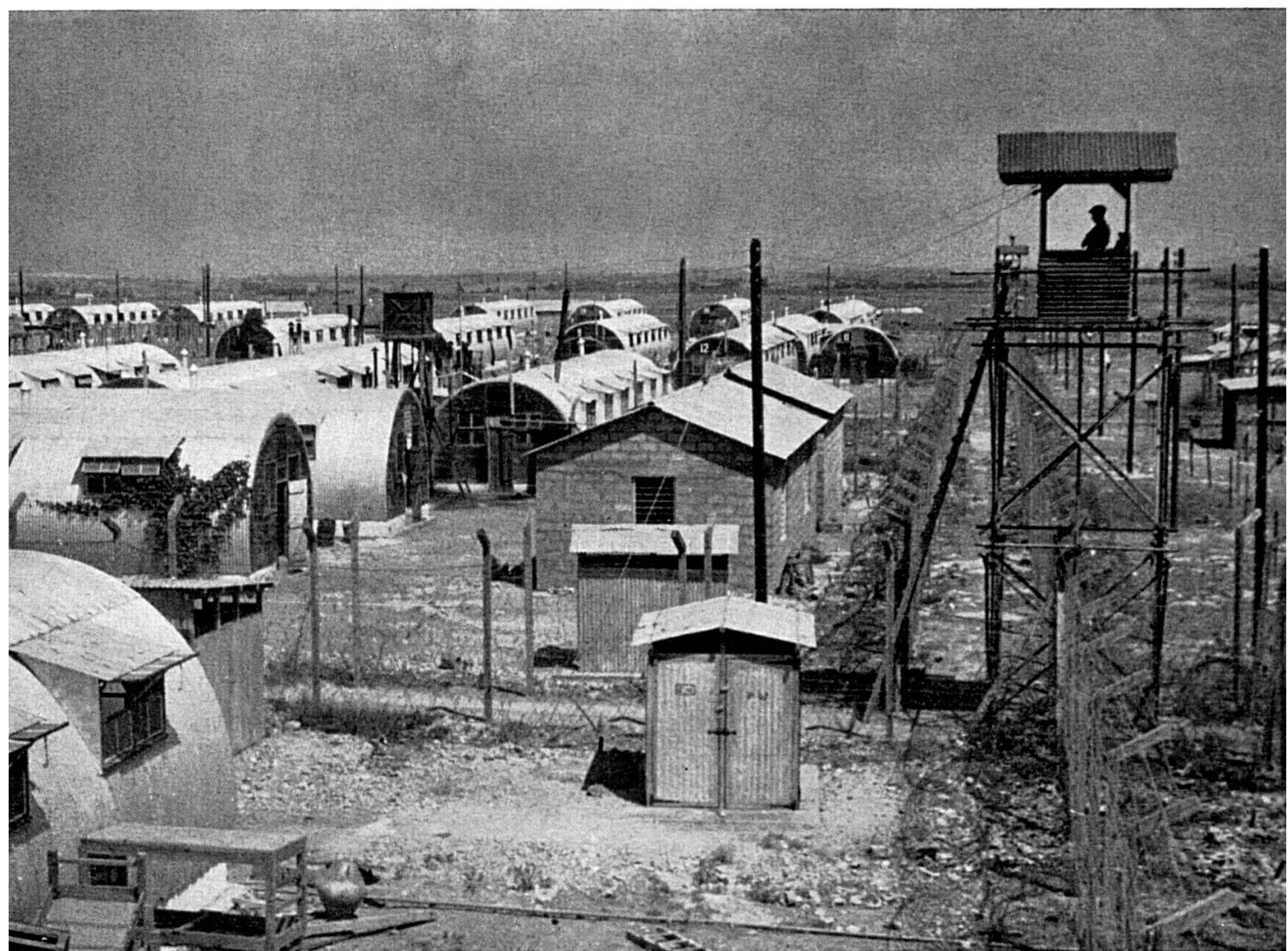
At the beginning and the end of their mission, the two ICRC delegates had long conversations with Sir Evelyn Baring, the Governor of Kenya, and were able to pass on to him their general comments on what they had seen during their visits to fifty-two camps. A detailed report on their findings and suggestions was sent to the British Government and, for information, to the Governor of Kenya and the British Red Cross.

REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

In October 1957, the International Committee's representative in Saigon ¹ was authorised by the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam to visit a number of political detainees who had been arrested following the events which occurred in 1954-1955 in the Saigon area.

The delegate was able to confirm that the prisoners are authorised to correspond with their families and to receive visits and parcels from them.

¹ Mr. A. Leuenberger.



The General-Delegate of the ICRC for the Near East made three visits to Pyla Camp, the largest place of detention in Cyprus



In a working camp in Kenya the delegates of the ICRC converse without witnesses with the detainees

III. SUMMARY TABLE OF RELIEF ACTIONS

PRINCIPAL RELIEF ACTIONS CLASSIFIED BY COUNTRIES AND CATEGORIES OF PERSONS ASSISTED

		Value Swiss Francs
Algeria	internees, detainees	12,995.—
	displaced civilian population . .	28,532.—
Austria	civilian population and war-disabled	2,942.—
Bulgaria	civilian population and war-disabled	2,014.—
Cyprus	political detainees	10,000.—
Czechoslovakia .	war-disabled	190.—
	civilian population	1,111.—
Egypt	civilian population, refugees . .	99,000.—
Germany (Federal Republic)	war-disabled « Volksdeutsche » .	8,449.—
Greece	political detainees and internees	210,000.—
Japan	Korean internees	59,451.—
Jordan	civilian population	6,900.—
Hungary	civilian population	69,107,450.—
Indonesia	displaced persons	30,000.—
Italy	internees	3,562.—
	blind young persons	27,635.—
Morocco	Algerian refugees	560,375.—
	wounded and sick	21,535.—
Nepal	civilian population	3,572.—
Poland	war-disabled and repatriated persons	8,009.—
	civilian population	1,554.—
Spain	civilian population	5,149.—
Tunisia	Algerian refugees	261,585.—
Other countries .	refugees, stateless persons, etc. .	1,091,931.—
Total as on December 31, 1957		71,563,941.—