

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1960)

Rubrik: Africa

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: 03.02.2026

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

I. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

Relief actions

The relief actions carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross¹ during 1960 once more illustrate the universality of the movement which sprung from Henry Dunant's noble initiative. They embraced the most distant parts of the world, while their character itself was highly varied. In some cases, they were what one may term "classic" actions, whereas on other occasions the ICRC had to take yet untrodden paths. However, the International Committee was always mindful to act in strict accordance with its almost 100-year-old tradition and its humanitarian ideal.

AFRICA

Congo.

The principal activity of the International Committee of the Red Cross on the African continent during 1960 was centred in the ex-Belgian Congo, where its work was both manifold and varied.

At the very outset of the disturbances which followed the proclamation of independence of the Congo, and in agreement with the Congolese authorities, two Delegates of the International Committee proceeded to the spot in order to take the necessary steps to help the victims of the events.

The first emergency action carried out by the International Committee in the Congo aimed at obtaining respect for the Red Cross emblem protecting neutral hospital zones set up on the initiative of

¹ For the sake of brevity the International Committee of the Red Cross will be designated by the initials ICRC.

the ICRC Delegation. These zones included, in particular, hospitals in Leopoldville and Stanleyville. They met with the approval of all concerned and gave the service expected of them¹.

The ICRC representatives also dealt with the evacuation of certain civilians wishing to leave the country, who were completely cut off from the outside world through living in the bush. Ambulance convoys, based on Leopoldville, were sent out to make contacts with those persons who were to be evacuated and took them to assembly centres. An aircraft with Red Cross markings carried out similar operations in the Stanleyville area. In addition, the ICRC Delegation distributed powdered milk and vitaminized products to the Congolese population in the native quarters of Leopoldville.

The success of these various relief actions was in great part due to the co-operation of voluntary workers of the Junior Red Cross in the Congo. This organization, formerly under the control of the Belgian Red Cross, is composed of young Congolese who are wholeheartedly devoted to the humanitarian aims of the Red Cross. These young people acted as interpreters and intermediaries to the ICRC Delegates, to whom they rendered invaluable service on account of their knowledge of the country and the local dialects.

Another ICRC Delegate proceeded to Usumbura, in Ruanda-Urundi, in order to organize the repatriation of former members of the Congolese forces who were in this territory under Belgian rule and who had asked to be repatriated to the interior of the Congo after being subjected to reprisals by local tribesmen. Accompanied by their women and children, they finally reached their home districts in small groups.

Medical Aid. — The most important part of Red Cross action in the Congo was the medical aid, which enabled the hospitals of the principal towns to continue to provide medical care for the population. In July 1960, the Congolese Minister of Public Health notified the ICRC Delegate in Leopoldville of his anxiety with regard to the

¹ The following Delegates were sent to the Congo in 1960 (in their order of arrival) : Messrs. Charles Ammann, Geoffrey Cassian Senn, Georges Olivet, Pierre Gaillard, Louis de Chastonay, Claude Pilloud, Jean-Pierre Schoenholzer, Edouard Louis Jaquet, Maurice Thudicum, René Fazel, Georges Hoffmann, Christian de Sépibus, Melchior Borsinger, Andréas Vischer. Secretaries : Miss Eliane Helfer, Mrs. Schoenholzer, Miss Sonja Baumann.

health position in the country, and in the same month the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Hammarskjöld, appealed through WHO to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to the League of Red Cross Societies to send teams of doctors to the Congo in order to fill the gaps caused by the departure of a large number of European doctors.

The two international institutions of the Red Cross immediately turned to the National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies and their appeal met with an instantaneous response.

Two types of teams were needed : on the one hand, those consisting of a doctor with surgical skill and a knowledge of tropical diseases, accompanied by two nurses, and, on the other hand, those consisting of a surgeon, a specialist in tropical diseases and three nurses. Without being compulsory for the teams as a whole, knowledge of French was nevertheless recommended for at least two members, including the doctor. It was considered that the mission would last at least three months. Forty-eight hours after this joint appeal, nine National Societies had declared themselves prepared to send part of the required personnel. The first of these teams, sent by the Norwegian Red Cross, arrived in Leopoldville by military aircraft on July 25, 1960. Nine others came from the following countries : Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iran, the Lebanon, Sweden and Yugoslavia. Moreover, a blood-transfusion team was sent by the Netherlands Red Cross. On July 28, following information received from Leopoldville, the World Health Organization urgently requested the ICRC and the League to send additional medical teams. Indeed, although the medical aid provided by the ten teams already on the spot was considerable, it was deemed insufficient and WHO therefore requested the International Red Cross for at least an equivalent number of additional teams. The ICRC delegates confirmed this information, gathered by the Congolese Ministry of Health, according to which the hospitals of the Kasai province and in particular that of the capital in Luluaburg, were completely without medical personnel ; it was thought likely that reports from other provinces would reveal a similar situation.

The ICRC and the League therefore decided to send out a second appeal to eighteen National Red Cross Societies which had not yet been called upon.

Together with WHO and the Congolese Government, a plan was drawn up whereby the medical teams sent by these National Societies would be divided between the principal hospitals of the country under the responsibility of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which would co-ordinate their action, in agreement with WHO and the Congolese authorities ; for its part, the League undertook the recruitment and transport of these teams, as well as all the administrative aspects of their activity : reception and accommodation of the teams, financial matters, personnel, etc.

We reproduce below the terms of the agreement of July 27, 1961, between the ICRC and the League, establishing their respective spheres of action :

- 1) In view of the present situation in the Congo, both institutions agreed that the ICRC should be responsible for all International Red Cross action in that country.
- 2) The League and the ICRC will call upon a certain number of National Societies jointly chosen by them to make medical teams available for the Congo.
- 3) The medical teams which will be provided by the National Red Cross Societies in response to the League's appeal will be under the direct control of the ICRC, which will co-ordinate their activities.
- 4) In order to ensure the well-being of the members of medical teams and to deal with internal administrative matters, it has been agreed that the League will send a representative to the Congo. This liaison representative will act in conjunction with the ICRC Delegation, which he will keep fully informed of his activities. He will confine himself there to the object of his mission as defined above.
- 5) Medical teams of the National Societies in the Congo will retain complete independence in all medical and scientific matters. They will, however, receive general directives from the ICRC Delegation regarding their work, in accordance with agreements which it will make with the local authorities, the representatives of WHO and, if necessary, with the United Nations forces.

The first phase of the action was the arrival and posting of the teams. An ICRC delegate accompanied them to their posts, in-

troduced them to the local civil and military authorities and supervised their installation. Without exception, they all took up their work immediately, thus replacing at a moment's notice and with remarkable courage the doctors who had been obliged by the circumstances to leave the country. They were well received by the population and thus did not suffer unduly as a result of the disturbances which were convulsing various parts of the Congo. Some of the teams had brought a certain amount of surgical supplies and medicaments, while others were provided with these supplies by the Central Congolese Medical and Pharmaceutical Depot (DCMP). Moreover, nearly all of them found adequate hospital equipment on the spot and in some cases this was even highly satisfactory.

Among the teams which remained in Leopoldville, one (from the Netherlands) took over the Blood Transfusion Service of the Congolese Red Cross. On the initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, another team (an Iranian doctor and two Greek nurses) was placed at the disposal of the Medical Service of the Congolese Army for duties in military camps in the capital.

This voluntary assistance undertaken on behalf of the Congolese people represented a far from trifling contribution on the part of the Red Cross movement. Based on a three months' period, the cost may be estimated at not less than 150,000 dollars.

Once the teams had been installed, the second phase began : that of the actual medical activity. In this connection, the ICRC Delegation in Leopoldville endeavoured to remain as closely in touch as possible with the teams posted in the various parts of the Congo. The United Nations placed a special aircraft at the disposal of the Delegation in order to ensure permanent contact with the teams and transport all necessary supplies, especially medicaments.

By October 15, 1960, the medical action comprised 28 teams of a total strength of nearly a hundred persons, including 52 doctors, aided by nurses, analysts, anaesthetists, interpreters, etc. These teams came from the following 20 countries : Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, Greece, India, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Sweden, United Arab Republic, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

Originally, this emergency action was planned to last three

months, concluding therefore at the end of October 1960. However, the position at that time still demanded the presence of numerous teams.

Due to governmental instability and financial difficulties, the Congolese Government and WHO, which, in its capacity as a specialized agency of the United Nations, acted as adviser to it, had not yet been able to carry into effect their plans for relieving the Red Cross teams by doctors under contract to the Congolese Government.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies therefore announced in a joint communiqué on October 28, 1960 that fourteen National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies had already agreed to extend their medical teams' stay by three months.

Other National Societies subsequently announced their intention of joining in the action or of extending the duration of their teams' mission, so that by the end of December 1960 medical teams from the following countries continued to work in the Congo: Australia, Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, India, Iran, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Sweden and Yugoslavia.

The medical teams of the National Red Cross Societies at work in the Congo, sometimes under the most trying conditions, displayed truly admirable enterprise. Their activity is, in the widest sense, a tribute to the efficiency and universality of our common emblem and, as the year 1960 drew to a close, the President of the ICRC, Mr. Léopold Boissier, sent them the following message:

During the year which is now drawing to its end there has been a unique achievement in the history of the universal movement founded by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It is in fact the first time that our institution—now approaching its centenary—has had to deal with medical aid on such a wide scale throughout a whole country. It is the first time also that, with the help of the League, it has had recourse to the co-operation of National Red Cross Societies for an action of this description.

By your devotion to your humanitarian task in particularly difficult circumstances, you honour the Red Cross to which the whole world turns with increasing admiration.

My colleagues join me in saying how proud we are to be able to rely upon all of you who, far from your homes and your own countries, are pursuing your charitable work on the threshold of the New Year.

I am sending you my heart-felt wishes for your and your families' happiness and the successful issue of your mission, and my sincere thanks to all.

Tracing of missing persons. — See the report of the Central Tracing Agency on its activities in the Congo, page 27.

Relief action on behalf of refugees. — In the Southern Kasai region, where tribal conflicts had broken out, Baluba tribesmen living in territories mainly occupied by the Lulua fled as the result of frequent attacks. They took refuge in areas occupied solely by Balubas, especially in the Bakwanga district. No official census has been taken of these refugees, but their numbers were estimated at almost 100,000. Their food and health situation had deteriorated to the point of famine. Working in co-operation with the emergency supply service of the United Nations, the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Congo therefore proceeded, in the face of serious difficulties, to distribute forty tons of foodstuffs. These relief supplies, provided by UNO, were transported by aircraft from Leopoldville to Luluaburg and then from Luluaburg to Bakwanga. All these consignments were accompanied by an ICRC delegate, who, in addition, organized and supervised their distribution to the refugees. However, owing to military operations in this area, the relief action had temporarily to be interrupted due to insecurity and disturbances.

At the end of the year, after its delegates had carried out an inspection mission on the spot, the ICRC studied, jointly with the United Nations, ways in which the large numbers of Baluba refugees still in the South Kasai region, and suffering acute famine, could be aided. In view of the manifold needs, the United Nations assumed the responsibility for the ensuing relief action, to which various National Red Cross Societies chose to associate themselves, with the participation of the League.

The development of the Red Cross in the Congo. — The ICRC Delegation also offered its services to the young Congolese Red

Cross at present in the making. Until the beginning of 1960, this Society was a branch of the Belgian Red Cross and is now being re-organized. The ICRC Delegation and the Society approached the Congolese Government jointly in order to obtain its accession to the Geneva Conventions and the official recognition of the young National Society. It should also be pointed out here that members of the Congolese Junior Red Cross performed magnificent work at the beginning of July in connection with the wholesale evacuation of European civilians. In August they resumed and extended the milk and vitamin distributions in the main districts of the town of Leopoldville, which was made possible by an initial gift from the ICRC, followed by regular donations from the emergency supply service of UNICEF. The Congolese Red Cross also gave the ICRC Delegation invaluable help in connection with the above-mentioned activities.

Detainees. — From the outset of the disturbances in the Congo, the ICRC endeavoured to come to the aid of military prisoners, as well as of those who had been arrested and imprisoned on political grounds. Numerous steps which the ICRC representatives in the Congo undertook in this connection met with success. The ICRC Delegation thus took part in the release and repatriation from Leopoldville to Brussels of fifteen members of Belgian military personnel wounded during the second half of August. An ICRC doctor escorted them from the hospital in Leopoldville until their arrival in Brussels.

Moreover, on various visits to the interior, the ICRC delegates also intervened on behalf of Congolese political prisoners, in particular in Stanleyville and Luluaburg. On several occasions, ICRC representatives visited penitentiaries and negotiated and obtained the release of detainees, while in other cases they provisioned prisons where food supplies were low as a result of the events.

In December, delegates visited the Luzumu prison in Leopoldville (where they spoke with politicians from the Eastern Province) and the Lula Farming School near Stanleyville, where several personalities of the Leopoldville Government were held. On December 27, the Doctor-Delegate of the ICRC was allowed to enter the

Hardy Military Camp at Thysville, where he spoke with Mr. Patrice Lumumba and those who were detained with him.

Moreover, an ICRC delegate in Katanga obtained permission from Mr. Tschombé's Government to visit the Buluo and Kasapa prisons, where over a thousand political prisoners were held.

Generally speaking, the ICRC endeavoured to visit all the political prisoners who had been brought to its attention in all parts of the Congo, regardless of the detainees' political leanings, race and standing.

Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

The ICRC Delegate in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Mr. G. C. Senn, continued to visit persons held in connection with the disturbances of the previous year. Thus, in April and May, the delegate went to the Domasi and Zomba prisons and to the Kanjedza camp, then, in November and December, to the Marandellas prison and the centre of assigned residence at Gokwe. In each of these establishments, he was able to examine detention conditions freely and speak without witnesses to the prisoners.

Cameroon

Dr. Ernest Gloor, Vice-President, represented the ICRC at the celebrations which marked the proclamation of independence of Cameroon on January 1, 1960 at Yaoundé. He was received by the Head of the Government, Mr. Ahmadou Ahidjo, and also made use of his stay by promoting the creation of a Red Cross Society in Cameroon, whose statutes were at that time under consideration. The ICRC subsequently sent a consignment of dressings and special pharmaceutical products to the Central Hospital of Yaoundé.

Algeria

The ICRC continued its activity in Algeria during 1960 as in previous years. Although the work became more difficult due to the nature of the hostilities, it was possible to give efficient assistance to some victims of these circumstances.

Assistance to detained persons in French hands

a) **In Algeria.** — The ICRC was not able in 1960, as it had done in previous years, to send a mission to Algeria in order to visit prisons and camps where persons arrested as a result of the events were detained. The French authorities, in fact, informed the Committee that due to re-organization of certain places of detention, in particular of the assembly and screening centres, such a mission should be postponed until the beginning of 1961¹. The ICRC nevertheless continued to aid detained and interned persons by sending them various relief supplies. Through its permanent delegate in Algiers (Mr. Roger Vust) and, in certain cases, through the French Red Cross, 15,000 packets of cigarettes as well as clothing for a value of 16,000 Swiss francs were distributed to them.

b) **In France.** — During the past year, ICRC delegates continued their activities on behalf of Algerian detainees and internees in France. Two series of visits to places of detention were carried out. In February, March and April, the centres of assigned residence in Neuville-sur-Ain, Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise (Gard), Larzac (Dordogne) and Vedenay (Seine-et-Marne) were visited. At the beginning of the summer, they visited about twenty prisons in various parts of France, as well as the *Centre d'identification judiciaire* at Vincennes. They inspected detention conditions and, as is the usual practice, were able to speak freely and without witnesses to detainees of their choosing. Following these visits, the delegates submitted various requests and made suggestions concerning detention conditions. Moreover, after each visit, a general report was presented to the French Government.

Since the prisoners had been authorized to organize school courses among themselves, the ICRC supplied needy detainees with articles of stationery. It subsequently sent them textbooks, in particular grammar, geography, history, literature and science handbooks. The total value of these gifts amounted to about 10,000 Swiss francs.

¹ The visits took place at that time and will be described in the next Annual Report.

In addition, 2,000 pairs of rubber boots were distributed to persons interned in the screening centres and 5,000 packets of cigarettes to those in hospital.

Finally, the authorities were approached in a large number of individual cases, both in France and in Algeria, concerning detainees, internees, missing persons, requests for relief, etc.

Assistance to resettled populations. — As it has been doing since 1957, the ICRC continued to come to the aid of those (particularly women and children) living in resettlement centres. In January, thanks to donations received in Switzerland, vitamin products and medicaments, of a value of 20,000 French francs (new), were dispatched to the Committee of the French Red Cross in Algiers. These relief supplies were then distributed in the centres by travelling teams of this Society in the presence of an ICRC delegate. At the same time, in reply to a request from the Committee of the French Red Cross at Tizi Ouzou, the ICRC sent about a thousand tins of condensed milk, also intended for persons who had been resettled.

In November, various gifts enabled the ICRC to send greater amounts of relief supplies to this category of victims of the events. Foodstuffs (35 tons of powdered milk and 2 1/2 tons of soup powder, of a total value of 175,000 Swiss francs) were placed at the disposal of the French Red Cross, which distributed them through its travelling teams and local committees among resettlement camps.

From November 28 to December 18 an ICRC mission (consisting of Mr. P. Gaillard, Mr. R. Vust and Mr. J. Muralti) went to the spot to organize this distribution.

Accompanied by representatives of the French Red Cross, the delegates visited about twenty resettlement centres. They were able to note that the nurses of the French travelling teams were performing large-scale medico-social duties, visiting one centre after another and looking after women and children with the aid of lorries equipped as mobile dispensaries.

Assistance to prisoners in the hands of the ALN. — During 1960, the ICRC continued ceaselessly to take steps on behalf of French prisoners captured by the Algerian *Armée de libération nationale*. Thus, at the end of January 1960, the General Delegate of the ICRC

in the Near East, Mr. D. de Traz, visited Tunis in order to obtain a satisfactory response from the GPRA to the general proposals set forth by the International Committee in May 1958 to "humanize" the Algerian conflict. At the same time, he backed a large number of requests for information from the Central Tracing Agency concerning French military and civilians who were missing or presumed captured by the ALN. None of these steps met with success.

On June 11, the GPRA notified the ICRC of its decision to accede to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. Without taking a stand on the legal aspect of this accession, the ICRC took note of this response as a positive answer to its memorandum of May 1958. It therefore renewed its approaches to the GPRA and to its representatives with a view to implementing the practical results which this accession would have for aiding prisoners in the hands of the ALN : dispatch of nominal lists of these prisoners as well as family messages, creation of an information agency, authorization for visits by ICRC delegates. By the end of 1960, the steps undertaken by the International Committee had unfortunately not yet led to any result. The ICRC greatly regrets the unfruitful nature of its efforts, but will nevertheless continue its endeavours.

NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

United Arab Republic

The ICRC delegation in Cairo, headed by Mr. E. Muller, continued its activities on behalf of stateless persons wishing to leave the country. In 1960, thanks to the intervention of the delegation, about a thousand emigrants, for the most part Jews, were able to leave Egypt for different countries, principally France, Brazil and the United States.

As departures became fewer it was possible to reduce the effective strength of the delegation and two members returned to Geneva.

In May, during his mission to the Middle East, Mr. F. Siordet, a member of the ICRC, stayed in Cairo and Alexandria in order to