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Activities of regional delegations

Since 1970, the following regional delegations have been set up by the ICRC: at Yaoundé (for West Africa), Addis Ababa (for East Africa), Caracas (for Latin America), Kuala Lumpur (for South-East Asia) and Beirut (for the Middle East). The regional delegates based in these various places travel periodically to the countries included in their respective sectors (see below). In 1973, several countries were also visited by the delegate-general for the area or other ICRC staff. ¹

The main purpose of such missions, whether carried out by regional delegates or delegates-general, is to establish continuous and fruitful contacts with National Red Cross Societies and governments. In this way, the ICRC is able to foster interest in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (protection of the victims of conflicts) and the Red Cross principles and to develop its assistance to detainees. These missions also allow the ICRC to be informed of areas where conflicts or disturbances might break out and to gather the necessary logistical information in the event of any relief actions that might have to be carried out.

In the field of the furtherance of the Geneva Conventions and Red Cross principles, the delegates endeavour to promote the dissemination of the documentation prepared to that end by the ICRC and to make the Red Cross movement better known, in particular by organizing conferences. To do that, they get in touch with the following bodies: with the Ministry of Defence of the country they are visiting, for the introduction of the "Soldier's Manual" ² and the "Summary of the Conventions" to members of the armed forces, and with regard to courses on international humanitarian law and lectures in military colleges; with the Ministry of Education, for the introduction in schools of the school textbook ³ and the Teacher's Manual; and with the Ministry of Health, with medical circles and with universities, with regard to the introduction of courses on international humanitarian law.

¹ See pp. 79 ff.

² See pp. 77 ff.

³ See pp. 78 ff.

In 1973, they drew the attention of governments to the importance of their countries' participation in the 1974 Diplomatic Conference.¹

All the contacts mentioned above have generally been made through the National Society concerned which, in most instances, works in co-operation with the ICRC. The ICRC, in its turn, takes interest in these Societies' activities and gives material support² within the limits of its possibilities.

In addition, ICRC delegates took part in the various Training Institutes which the League organized for National Societies, and in other Red Cross regional meetings.³

With regard to assistance to detainees, the delegates request authorization to visit the places of detention where "political" detainees are often to be found. (In this Report, this term includes not only persons sentenced or detained on account of their political ideas, but also on account of offences committed mainly for political or ideological motives. It is a convenient expression for the ICRC to use, but that does not mean that the ICRC seeks to prejudge the status of those detainees.)

The purpose of all such visits is exclusively humanitarian: to ascertain what are the prisoners' conditions of detention and to put forward, if necessary, proposals for their improvement. The ICRC does not enter into any discussions with the authorities or with prisoners on the grounds for which prisoners are detained.

In the course of such visits, the delegates converse as they please with detainees and without witnesses. They submit their conclusions, first to the person in charge of the place of detention and then to his military or civilian superiors, as the case may be. Their findings and recommendations are later incorporated in an official report sent by the ICRC in Geneva to the government concerned alone. The ICRC considers these reports as being confidential and any public communications that may be issued are restricted to the names of the places of detention that were visited and the dates on which the visits took place.

In some countries, ICRC delegates are authorized to see only specific categories of detainees, for instance, persons who have

¹ See pp. 63.

² See pp. 54 ff.

³ See pp. 80 and 81.

been convicted or charged, or those who have been interned on the basis of an administrative order; sometimes, too, visits may only be made at widely separated intervals. In all those cases, the ICRC endeavours to obtain authorization to visit a wider circle of persons or to carry out visits at shorter intervals.

In addition, the ICRC contributes to the improvement of the living conditions of the prisoners visited by supplying them with comforts.

Africa

Within the scope of the ICRC's regular missions as described above, the delegate-general and regional delegates for Africa¹ went in 1973 to the following twenty-seven countries: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Dahomey, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta, Zaire and Zambia.

VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION

In seven countries, the ICRC delegates were granted authorization to visit places of detention:

Burundi: 10 places of detention containing about 1,620 detainees were visited (in this special case, these visits were made in the presence of witnesses).

Cameroon: 6 places of detention containing about 4,800 detainees were visited.

The Gambia: 3 places of detention containing about 250 detainees were visited.

Liberia: 3 places of detention containing about 470 detainees were visited.

Rwanda: 13 places of detention containing over 5,000 detainees were visited.

¹ The regional delegate for North Africa is based in Geneva.

Togo: 6 places of detention containing over 1,100 detainees were visited.

Zambia: 3 places of detention containing over 900 detainees were visited.

Persons detained on political grounds or for offences of a political nature were often put together with criminals, or else their status was not clearly determined. The ICRC, consequently, offered material assistance to all prisoners and visited all sections of the prisons rather than specific categories of detainees.¹ The total value of assistance supplied by the ICRC in the 44 African places of detention visited in 1973 amounted to 180,000 francs.²

MATERIAL AID TO NATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES

The ICRC provided 28 African National Societies with material aid worth nearly 1,360,000 francs.²

Latin America

The activities of the ICRC regional delegation in Latin American countries had to be curtailed somewhat from September 1973, as the regional delegates had to concentrate their efforts in Chile³ following the events that took place there. During the first eight months of 1973, the delegate-general and regional delegates for Latin America went to the following eighteen countries: Argentina, Bahamas (National Society in process of formation), Barbados (National Society in process of formation), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION

In nine countries, the ICRC delegates requested and were granted authorization to visit places of detention:

¹ This also applies to places of detention in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.

² For details, see table of relief supplies on pp. 54 ff.

³ See p. 32.

Argentina: 12 places of detention containing about 9,170 detainees were visited.

Brazil: 12 places of detention containing about 3,400 detainees were visited.

*Chile:*¹ 3 places of detention containing about 2,000 detainees were visited.

Colombia: 7 places of detention containing over 6,400 detainees were visited.

Guatemala: 6 places of detention containing over 2,800 detainees were visited.

Mexico: 6 places of detention containing over 7,000 detainees were visited.

Nicaragua: 8 places of detention containing about 1,200 detainees were visited.

Uruguay (2 series of visits): 7 places of detention containing nearly 3,600 detainees were visited.²

Venezuela: 11 places of detention containing over 9,500 detainees were visited.

In several of these countries, delegates of the ICRC were granted permission to visit not only civilian places of detention, under the authority of the Ministry of Justice or of the Interior, but also military prisons subject to the Ministry of Defence, more particularly in those countries where guerrillas were active.

The total value of the aid provided by the ICRC to the 72 places of detention visited in Latin America in 1973 amounted to 76,000 francs.³

MATERIAL AID TO NATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES

The ICRC provided nine Latin American National Societies with material aid worth over 500,000 francs³ (not including the special action in Chile).

¹ These figures refer to a mission carried out before the September 1973 events; activities from September are dealt with in a special chapter on page 32.

² These figures refer only to the second series of visits.

³ For details, see table of relief supplies, on p. 57.

Asia

The regional delegates of the ICRC for South-East Asia went in 1973 to the following eight countries: Brunei, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION

In four countries, the ICRC delegates were granted authorization to visit places of detention:

Malaysia: 5 places of detention containing over 1,300 detainees were visited.

Philippines: 13 places of detention containing nearly 2,500 detainees were visited.

Sri Lanka: 8 places of detention containing over 4,000 detainees, held after the 1971 disturbances, were visited.

Thailand: 8 places of detention containing over 5,000 detainees were visited.

The total value of the aid provided by the ICRC to the places of detention visited in South-East Asia in 1973 amounted to 58,000 francs. ¹ When it was found that some detainees had never received visits from their families, who lived in remote areas and were too poor to pay the fare, the delegates arranged, among other things, for transport to take those families, at ICRC expense, to the places of detention.

MATERIAL AID TO NATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES

The ICRC provided two National Societies in South-East Asia with material aid worth 35,500 francs. ²

REUNITING OF FAMILIES

In September 1973, representatives of the Red Cross Societies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and of the Republic

¹ For details, see table of relief supplies on p. 58.

² Not including ICRC actions for National Societies in the Asian sub-continent and Indo-China.

of Korea came to the Geneva headquarters of the ICRC in order to inform the latter of the situation with regard to the talks that had been initiated for establishing procedures acceptable to both parties for tracing missing persons and eventually reuniting the members of Korean families separated since the division of Korea.

The ICRC renewed the offers it had previously made, namely that it was at the disposal of both parties, should they find it necessary to call upon the services of the Central Tracing Agency and benefit from its experience.

Middle East

Besides the action undertaken by the ICRC in the countries directly involved in the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries, its regional delegates and delegate-general for the Middle East went in 1973 to the following six countries: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Oman, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic.

VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION

Yemen Arab Republic: ICRC delegates carried out two rounds of visits to places of detention. The second time, they were granted authorization to visit ten places of detention containing over 1,300 detainees. Relief items worth more than 12,000 francs were distributed to the detainees.

ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY PERSONS ¹

At the time of their first round of visits in the *Yemen Arab Republic* in March and April 1973, the ICRC delegates set up a relief distribution programme for the refugees from the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The distribution took place in the Bab el Mandeb area: about one thousand persons benefited from the supplies distributed, consisting of 25.5 tons of wheat, 3 tons of powdered milk and 1.5 tons of sugar.

¹ For fuller details, see table of relief supplies, pp. 59 ff.

In the *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen*, a programme was set up to bring assistance to "political" detainees and their families, and also to the disabled.

In addition, relief supplies were despatched to victims of floods on Socotra Island.

REUNITING OF FAMILIES

In *Iran* and *Iraq*, ICRC delegates discussed with the authorities and National Society officials problems in connection with the expulsion of Iranian nationals from Iraq.

Europe

For obvious geographical reasons, no regional delegation has been set up in Europe. Missions are despatched direct from Geneva.

The missions carried out in 1973 to various European countries by ICRC representatives, in particular by the delegate-general for Europe and North America, are mentioned on pp. 79 and 80.

The ICRC, in response to requests reaching it from several National Red Cross Societies, sent them medicaments not readily available, worth 27,000 francs.¹

In addition, the ICRC undertook specific actions in two countries.

Northern Ireland

Two ICRC delegates carried out a further series of visits—the fifth since 1971—to various places of detention in Northern Ireland: to Maze Prison on 18 and 20 July and to Armagh Prison and the Crumlin Road Prison in Belfast on 19 July.

Delegates were able to carry out their mission quite freely and spoke with detainees of their own choice without any witnesses.

As customary, the report on the series of visits was sent by the ICRC to the United Kingdom Government. As in the case of the previous visits, in 1971 and 1972, the full text of the report was made public by the Government.

¹ See table of relief supplies, p. 59.