

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1974)

Rubrik: Cyprus

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: 14.08.2025

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

Cyprus

GENERAL SITUATION AND FIRST MEASURES TAKEN BY THE ICRC

Upon learning of the 15 July *coup d'état* and the ensuing disorders, the ICRC asked the Cyprus Red Cross for full particulars of the needs of the civilian population, the wounded and the sick, and about the number of prisoners.

When Turkish armed forces landed in Cyprus on 20 July, the ICRC addressed a call to the parties to the conflict, who were signatories to the Geneva Conventions. In this message, after offering its services, the ICRC stated that it counted on a full and strict application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by the belligerents. It reminded them further that the distinction between non-combatants and combatants must, under the Conventions, be maintained in all circumstances; that the wounded and the sick, prisoners of war and civilians must be treated humanely; and that medical institutions and units must be respected.

On receiving positive replies from each of the parties and on being asked to render aid, the ICRC took steps to obtain permission to land at the British base of Akrotiri. This done, an aircraft provided by the Swiss Government left Geneva for Cyprus on 22 July carrying fourteen delegates (including three doctors, relief experts and a delegate of the Central Tracing Agency) and 3.5 tons of medical supplies. An ICRC delegate left for Ankara on the same day and was joined there on 25 July by a second delegate and a doctor, and on 27 July by a delegate of the Central Tracing Agency.

In the Greek-Cypriot area, ICRC action on behalf of isolated Turkish-Cypriot communities and prisoners held by the Greek-Cypriots developed rapidly, and by 29 July 1,750 prisoners had been visited by the ICRC delegates in the Limassol stadium, in the Larnaca camp and at Paphos.

By that same date, the Nicosia central hospital and the Famagusta, Paphos and Limassol hospitals had received medical supplies for the wounded and the sick.

The ICRC delegation's humanitarian activities in the area which had come under Turkish control could not develop at the same

rate, but two Turkish hospitals in Nicosia were furnished with medical supplies during the first few days.

The ICRC delegates in Ankara, with the competent authorities, drew up a programme of visits to Greek-Cypriot and Greek prisoners in Turkish hands as soon as the first transfers to Turkey had been made.

In the context of the Geneva negotiations, on 30 July, a declaration was signed by the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, paragraph 3 (d) of which read as follows:

Military personnel and civilians detained as a result of the recent hostilities shall be either exchanged or released under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross within the shortest time possible.

Following this declaration, the ICRC expressed the hope that its delegates would, under the terms of that mandate, be given all the necessary support by the authorities concerned.

At a meeting with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 31 July, the President of the ICRC Executive Board reported upon the problems encountered by delegates in the area under Turkish army control. The Minister assured the ICRC of his Government's support.

To sum up, between 20 July and 14 August, when hostilities were resumed, the ICRC carried out the following activities on behalf of victims of the conflict:

- visits to prisoners of war and civilian internees;
- preparation and transmission of lists of prisoners and capture cards;
- collection and distribution of family messages;
- registration of requests for the tracing of missing persons; opening of enquiries;
- distribution of relief supplies¹ for the wounded, the sick, prisoners, displaced persons, Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot

¹ A complete table showing the relief distributed in Cyprus by the ICRC in 1974 is given on page 17.

communities isolated in their villages (in co-operation with the government services and the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force in Cyprus).

These varied activities made it necessary to send out qualified personnel and to allocate considerable funds. On the strength of the plans drawn up by its delegations in Cyprus and Turkey, the ICRC on 9 August issued an appeal for funds to a number of Governments and Red Cross Societies.

When hostilities were resumed, on 14 August, and in view of the danger threatening certain groups of civilians, the ICRC took the initiative of setting up three neutralized areas in Nicosia. On that same day, it received an assurance from the belligerents that they would respect those three areas during the fighting, which proved to be the case.

Further, a list of Nicosia hospitals bearing the Red Cross emblem was conveyed to the Turkish authorities, who confirmed to the ICRC that the Turkish armed forces had received strict orders to respect the safety of hospitals.

When a further part of the island came under Turkish armed control and tens of thousands of persons poured into the Greek-Cypriot area as a result, the ICRC strengthened its delegation in Cyprus. Between 20 August and 31 December 1974, the average number of delegates was forty, apart from local employees.

On 16 August, the ICRC again appealed for funds¹ so as to be able to fulfil its duties under the Conventions and carry out its relief programmes.

INTER-COMMUNITY TALKS

Talks between representatives of the Cypriot communities, with which the ICRC was associated, were mainly concentrated on humanitarian problems. The ICRC submitted proposals, most of which were adopted, which led to solutions of the problems and to relatively speedy protection and assistance for victims. Thus it was mainly under the aegis of those talks that agreements were reached regarding the release and repatriation of prisoners.

¹ For a list of contributions as at 31 December 1974, see table on page 105.

PRISONERS OF WAR

The July and August events resulted in the internment of 3,308 Turkish Cypriots and Turks and 2,579 Greek Cypriots and Greeks.

In the Greek-Cypriot area, Turkish-Cypriot and Turkish prisoners were assigned to eleven places of detention. All were repeatedly visited by the ICRC before being finally released (the first visits were made during the week 22 to 29 July).

In the area under Turkish army control, Greek-Cypriot and Greek prisoners were held in five places of detention regarded by the detaining authorities as transit camps (first visit on 1 August).

The Greek-Cypriot and Greek prisoners in Turkey, held in three places of detention, were visited by ICRC delegates up to the time of their release (first visit on 3 August).

During the visits, ICRC delegates were able to speak without witnesses with prisoners of their choice. In accordance with Article 70 of the Third Convention, capture cards were completed by all prisoners.

The ICRC delegates helped to improve detention conditions by distributing medicaments and food and by transmitting family messages. Each visit was the subject of a report which, according to custom, the ICRC sent to the Detaining Power and to the prisoners' own authorities.

With the exception of some isolated cases of release (five prisoners, including four wounded, released by the Turkish authorities on 8 August, sixteen prisoners released by the Greek-Cypriot authorities on 11 August, under ICRC auspices), most of the prisoners of war were released in the course of fifteen operations conducted under the ICRC's auspices at Ledra Palace, Nicosia, between 16 September and 3 October, and again between 18 and 28 October.

These release operations, which accordingly started on 16 September under a first agreement signed on 13 September, covered certain priority categories such as the wounded and the sick, men over fifty-five or under eighteen years of age, teachers, students, ecclesiastics, doctors and nurses.

A further agreement, under which the ICRC received the mandate of supervising the general release of all prisoners of war, was concluded on 20 September.

CIVILIAN POPULATION

Displaced persons: As a result of the events, more than 150,000 Greek Cypriots living in the Cypriot area which had come under Turkish army control left their villages and sought refuge in the Greek-Cypriot area. Civilians who had at first been scattered in the southern districts gradually assembled around the important centres.

The camps for displaced persons were regularly visited by ICRC and Central Tracing Agency delegates.¹ Several hundred tons of relief supplies² (blankets, camp-beds and food) for displaced persons were delivered by the ICRC to the local Red Cross and to a government body, which distributed them in close co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on 20 August, as co-ordinator for UN humanitarian assistance to Cyprus).

Apart from some old people, the inhabitants of several Turkish-Cypriot localities near the British base of Episkopi (Limassol district) left their villages at an early stage of the conflict and sought refuge in the territory of the British base, where the authorities took charge of them.

By the end of December 1974 there were 8,600 Turkish Cypriots at the Episkopi base, in two camps. At the British authorities' request, the ICRC provided those in charge of the two camps with several tons of protein-rich food, milk, baby foods, multivitamins, blankets and tents. Both camps were visited by ICRC delegates, and a detailed report was sent to the British authorities.

ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Greek-Cypriot communities in the area under Turkish army control: The Turkish authorities assured the ICRC that they would apply the four Geneva Conventions in the area under their control.

The ICRC delegates who were authorized to enter the area found two different situations with respect to the population:

- On the one hand, there was a balanced population where Greek Cypriots had been able to remain in their villages and to a large

¹ See page 15 below.

² See table of relief supplies on page 17.

extent to provide for their own needs. Such a population was found in three distinct zones:

- the Karpas peninsula;
 - the Maronite villages of Kormakiti, Dhiorios and Karpasha;
 - Kyrenia, Bellapaise and nearby villages.
- On the other hand, there was an unbalanced situation where the population consisted predominantly of aged and infant persons who had remained in the villages in small groups. They depended on outside help, and were assembled at different points. They were found in the following sectors:
- the Morphou and Myrtou regions;
 - the southern villages of the Karpas peninsula;
 - the villages of the Kyrenia and Famagusta sectors.

Most of the Greek-Cypriot or mixed localities visited by ICRC delegates had been entirely or partly abandoned at the time of the events by their Greek-Cypriot inhabitants, and the ICRC delegates had found only old people, women and children deprived of their family support and living in isolation. Mention should also be made of some hundreds who took refuge in the Dome Hotel at Kyrenia. By the end of 1974, some 120 were still there.

In its concern about the well-being, and particularly about the health and medical situation, of these isolated Greek-Cypriot communities, ICRC delegates made regular visits to approximately 15,000 persons to whom food, medical supplies and family messages were distributed.

The ICRC delegates also approached the competent authorities with a view to having the living conditions of those communities improved.

Turkish-Cypriot communities in the Greek-Cypriot area: The delegates of the ICRC had free access to all Turkish-Cypriot or mixed localities and were able to talk freely with the population.

From the end of July to end of December 1974, the Turkish-Cypriot population diminished owing to migrations, transfers carried out by UNFICYP or the ICRC under agreements between the parties, and repatriations of prisoners.

Apart from the Turkish Cypriots who sought refuge in camps in the territory of the British base of Episkopi at the end of July, and the inhabitants of villages directly linked with the area under Turkish army control, the ICRC made regular visits to some 20,000 Turkish Cypriots scattered in seventy-three localities.

The Turkish Cypriots' freedom of movement, which had been suspended by the Greek-Cypriot authorities, was gradually restored, and permits for travel within the districts could be obtained.

As the Turkish-Cypriot population had virtually ceased to exercise any remunerative activity since the July events, its resources were nearing exhaustion by the end of 1974 and it became increasingly dependent on outside aid.

MEDICAL ACTION

At the end of July, the ICRC medical delegates in Cyprus made a survey of medical requirements. In particular they visited hospitals and drew up a list of medical supplies that were running out and in urgent need of replenishment.

In view of the inadequacy of the medical and sanitary services in various parts of the island, ICRC mobile medical teams were found to be necessary in order to meet the medical needs of the Greek-Cypriot communities in the zone controlled by the Turkish armed forces and those of the Turkish-Cypriot communities in the Greek-Cypriot zone.

The ICRC appealed to National Red Cross Societies, and medical teams were rapidly provided by the Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland.

The teams, of which there were six in December 1974, carried out the following activities:

- dispensary work: examination of forty to sixty patients daily by each team;
- epidemiological supervision and prevention of epidemics, including the opening of rural hospitals and medical supply depots and repairs to damaged water pipes and latrines. This work was carried out by medical teams with occasional assistance from UNFICYP;

- distribution of food, water, blankets and clothing to the needy, with United Nations co-operation;
- transfer of urgent medical cases: on 30 September 1974, an agreement on the transfer of certain categories of the population was concluded between representatives of the two Cypriot communities. The agreement laid down, *inter alia*, that the ICRC would attend to the transfer of wounded and sick to the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot hospitals at Nicosia.

In the Nicosia-Famagusta sector (Mesaoria Plain), one of the principal aims of the ICRC medical teams was to improve general living conditions for Greek-Cypriot populations of the villages of Voni, Gypsos and Vitsadha. In particular the ICRC provided medical and administrative supervision for two operations for the transfer of 1,571 Greek Cypriots (407 from Voni and 1,164 from Gypsos), most of them very old people, to Nicosia-South.

CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

From the beginning of hostilities in Cyprus, a delegate of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) took up the task of organizing a Tracing Agency as an activity of the ICRC delegation in Cyprus.

By the end of 1974, the Agency's infrastructure was as follows:

- a central bureau in Nicosia-South, co-ordinating the Agency's activities throughout the country;
- a bureau in Nicosia-North providing a link with the area under the control of the Turkish armed forces;
- four liaison bureaux in the Greek-Cypriot area: Larnaca, Limassol, Paphos and Ormidhia.

Six CTA delegates from Geneva and about 120 local employees ensured the smooth running of the bureaux.

The main problems with which the CTA had to deal in Cyprus were the following:

Family messages: A daily exchange of some 5,000 messages, on the one hand between separated families in the northern and southern areas, and on the other between isolated communities and the outside world.

Altogether some 500,000 messages were transmitted by the CTA, more than 120,000 of which were channelled beyond the island through Geneva.

Tracing of missing persons: Some 10,000 index cards were made out for persons presumed to be missing.

In its quest for information about the missing, the CTA opened enquiries with the competent authorities. By the end of 1974, some 2,000 cases were still regarded as missing.

Transfers: Following the agreements reached between representatives of the two Cypriot communities, the ICRC was entrusted with responsibility for the transfer of three categories of persons:

- medical cases (based on the decision of ICRC doctors);
- persons cut off from their usual place of residence (stranded persons);
- dependent and isolated persons of over sixty.

Statistics: The Tracing Agency established about 100,000 index cards on displaced families, missing persons, prisoners of war, and transfers.

CYPRUS

Relief supplies distributed by the ICRC from 22 July to 31 December 1974

	Greek Cypriots		Turkish Cypriots		Total	
	Quantity	Value in Sw. Fr.	Quantity	Value in Sw. Fr.	Quantity	Value in Sw. Fr.
Medical supplies .	16,573 kg	331,500.—	13,043 kg	260,900.—	29,616 kg	592,400.—
Tents	9,543 units	4,771,500.—	128 units	64,000.—	9,671 units	4,835,500.—
Blankets	145,861 units	1,750,300.—	11,525 units	138,300.—	157,386 units	1,888,600.—
Camp-beds	13,986 units	699,300.—	203 units	10,200.—	14,189 units	709,500.—
Jerricans	1,902 units	9,500.—	162 units	800.—	2,064 units	10,300.—
Sheets	866 units	8,700.—	—	—	866 units	8,700.—
Powdered milk . .	29,026 kg	116,100.—	19,312 kg	77,200.—	48,338 kg	193,300.—
Baby foods	43,496 kg	217,500.—	4,871 kg	24,400.—	48,367 kg	241,900.—
Protein-rich food .	242,688 kg	1,213,400.—	37,131 kg	185,700.—	279,819 kg	1,399,100.—
Clothing	28,481 kg	427,200.—	—	—	28,481 kg	427,200.—
Gas heaters	400 units }	60,000.—	—	—	400 units }	60,000.—
Gas cylinders . . .	400 units }		—	—	400 units }	
Footwear	3,493 pairs	69,900.—	3,098 pairs	62,000.—	6,591 pairs	131,900.—
Socks	4,654 pairs	—	1,450 pairs	—	6,104 pairs	—
		9,674,900.—		823,500.—		10,498,400.—