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Missing persons

In 1975, the Central Tracing Agency was still busy trying to trace those who had disappeared during the 1974 events. During the first six months the CTA managed to discover the fate of most of those reported missing, leaving to the competent authorities on the island only those cases which they alone might settle (see p. 32).

Financial situation

During 1975, the Cyprus mission received further contributions from governments, National Red Cross Societies and various other bodies. These, added to the balance brought forward from 1974, made a total of 5.7 million Swiss francs. Total expenditure for the operation was 4.8 million Swiss francs leaving a balance of 927,000 Swiss francs at the end of 1975 (see Tables VII and VIII).

France

The Claustre affair

Early in October, after a demarche by the French Government, the ICRC took up the case of Mrs. Françoise Claustre, a French citizen who had been taken prisoner in Tibesti by a movement opposing the legal Government of Chad.

In this affair the ICRC followed the line of conduct that it had set itself in 1972 for cases in which hostages are taken, and which it had published at that time in the *International Review of the Red Cross*. According to these rules, the ICRC will only act by way of exception if one of the parties so requests and the others so agree and then only provided that there is no direct or indirect contact between the parties.

This is the answer that it sent to the French Government and to General Félix Malloun Ngakoutou Beyndi, President of the Supreme Military Council and Head of State of the Republic of Chad. The offer by the ICRC to act, if so required, as a neutral intermediary was declined by the Chad Head of State.

Northern Ireland

In March 1975, an ICRC delegate, accompanied by a medical delegate, visited the places of detention where internees were being held under the terms of the emergency legislation introduced in 1971. This was the seventh series of visits to all of the places of detention since this legislation came into effect.

The delegates visited 421 men and 115 women (including 13 administrative internees) in the Maze (Long Kesh) and Armagh prisons and spoke with them, as usual, without witnesses.

At that time the British Government was beginning to implement its policy of progressively releasing internees at the rate of four or five a day. The last of the internees were released at the beginning of December, thus putting an end to internment without trial.

The ICRC, consequently, made no further visits in that region during the rest of the year.

Portugal

Visits to political detainees

On three missions—in August, October and December 1975—ICRC delegates visited six detention centres where, on the last of these visits, they saw 1,400 political detainees. As usual, the ICRC representatives spoke to the detainees without witnesses. With the agreement of the Government and the support of the Portuguese Red Cross, the ICRC also helped financially the most needy of the detainees' families.

Assistance to persons repatriated from Mozambique and Angola

Until October 1975, when the League took over this mission, the ICRC co-ordinated relief work to help Portuguese citizens who had returned from Mozambique and Angola. This work was performed on the spot by the Portuguese Red Cross in close collaboration with the competent government bodies.

The ICRC appealed to a number of governments and National Societies, asking for their support in carrying out this operation.

ICRC representatives discussed with the Portuguese authorities problems relating to the protection of those Portuguese citizens who had remained in Mozambique and Angola.

In this connection, the ICRC sent a representative of the CTA to Lisbon to help develop the activities of the Portuguese Red Cross Tracing Office (see p. 31).

It should once again be stressed that, with the help of the Portuguese authorities and Red Cross, the ICRC was able to send large quantities of relief supplies via Lisbon for its humanitarian work in Angola.

MIDDLE EAST

Conflict between Israel and the Arab countries

For the eighth consecutive year, the ICRC continued the mission which it started in 1967 to help the victims of the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries.

As the last of the prisoners of war taken in October 1973 had been repatriated during 1974, the ICRC could concentrate its efforts in 1975 on protecting and helping the civilians, especially those in the Israeli-occupied territories. The delegates tried to get to grips with the humanitarian problems besetting both individuals and whole communities, in order to try to solve them insofar as the means and possibilities available to the ICRC allowed.

The ICRC delegates held frequent discussions with the Israeli authorities on the subject of these various problems which included the destruction of houses, expulsions and the medical situation in the occupied territories.

ICRC activity, as in the past, was based essentially on the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Israel did not always recognize the applicability of this Convention to the occupied territories although it did allow the delegates to perform the tasks resulting therefrom on a pragmatic case-to-case basis.

On this basis, large-scale action was continued to help civilian detainees and internees (visits, distribution of relief supplies in prisons, transport for detainees' families) and to assist people in crossing the demarcation lines (especially students from the Gaza Strip, Sinai and the West Bank of the Jordan).

Relief food supplies made available to the ICRC by the European Economic Community, the Swiss Confederation and the Arab Republic of Egypt were distributed to the needy as in previous years, under the supervision of the delegates.

Help to inhabitants of the occupied territories was made possible by the collaboration of the ICRC delegations in Amman, Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, which, in particular, participated in the operations enabling families to visit one another across the demarcation lines. They also forwarded a mass of family messages (see p. 31) and ensured that the needy received relief food and other supplies either direct or through charitable organisations.

Activities to help civilian detainees and internees

In 1975, ICRC delegates visited seven prisons in Israel and seven in the occupied territories. Just over 3,000 Arab civilians from the occupied territories and the Arab countries parties to the conflict were being held in those fourteen prisons.

As the prison population was more stable in Israel than in the occupied territories, the ICRC visited detainees in Israel every two months and those in the occupied territories monthly. The usual reports were drawn up and submitted to the governments concerned (the detainees' own governments and the Detaining Power). Various approaches were made to the Detaining Power on the subject of the conditions in the prisons, especially overcrowding.

Some 6,500 standard parcels, containing cigarettes, biscuits, etc., and 31,300 parcels of fruit were distributed by the delegates who also bought 1,525 books for the shelves of the prison libraries and transmitted 6,263 Red Cross messages to the detainees. The ICRC also financed the purchase of glasses, dentures, orthopaedic footwear and artificial limbs for 264 Arab prisoners.

The ICRC continued to provide transport for most of the detainees' families in the occupied territories, from their homes to the prisons. In all, 722 coachloads and 139 taxi trips conveyed 32,788 persons. The financial contribution of the ICRC to these operations was nearly 150,000 Swiss francs.

Reuniting families and student travel

When a person wishes to be reunited with his family in the occupied territories, his relatives may submit a request to that effect to the authorities of the Occupying Power. Once this first step has been taken, the ICRC intervenes only to help those cases which are refused and where the humanitarian problems created by the separation are apparent.

In 1975, thirty cases were submitted by the ICRC. Of these, five were accepted, sixteen refused and nine undecided. The above-mentioned procedure, which has been in force in the occupied West Bank of the Jordan for many years, was introduced in the Gaza Strip and in Sinai only in the second half of 1975 (during the first six months 28 persons were reunited with their families in Gaza and Sinai).

Operations to enable civilians to travel between the occupied territories and the adjacent Arab countries continued during 1975: families were reunited on one side or the other of the demarcation lines, students from the occupied territories returned home for their holidays and then went back to their studies together with new students who had just completed their secondary education in the occupied territories.

Most of these operations took place in the United Nations buffer zone in Sinai, which 17,797 persons crossed, compared to only 8 at Lod, 33 by the Allenby Bridge and 94 at the western entrance to Kuneitra.

Exchange of mortal remains

In April and December 1975, the remains of 93 Egyptian soldiers were returned to the Egyptian authorities and those of 39 Israeli soldiers who fell on the Egyptian front in 1973, to Israel.

Egypt also returned to Israel the bodies of two civilians.

These exchange operations were carried out in the presence of ICRC delegates.

Repatriation of an Israeli soldier

An Israeli soldier who had been captured by the Lebanese forces on the night of 1-2 January 1975, was repatriated on 17 February. In accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, he had been visited by ICRC delegates on three occasions during his captivity. On the same day, Israel freed eleven Lebanese civilians who were repatriated under ICRC auspices.

Relief supplies

The relief food supplies provided by the European Economic Community, the Swiss Confederation (see p. 28) and the Arab Republic of Egypt (78 tons for people in southern Sinai) were distributed to the needy by various organisations with the participation of the ICRC delegates.

The delegates set up a specific relief operation between February and April. Torrential rains had flooded the El Arish region, causing serious damage and leaving many people without shelter. On 22 February, the ICRC organised the first convoy, transporting 2,000 blankets and several dozen tents, while the Israeli authorities provided emergency food and medical supplies. During the following days, the ICRC also distributed 35 tons of flour from the relief food supplies provided by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation.

As soon as the catastrophe was announced, Egypt proposed sending relief supplies to the victims. The ICRC delegates negotiated with the Israeli authorities and obtained permission for 72 tons of emergency food supplies and 10,000 metres of cloth, a gift from the Egyptian Red Crescent, to the flood victims, to be handed over to a Red Crescent representative at El Arish on 30 April. These supplies were distributed by the local town council and Red Crescent with the help of the ICRC delegates.

Help for invalids

At the end of 1974, the Red Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany made a further financial contribution to the *Magen David Adom* to enable it to continue providing help for the disabled in the occupied territories in 1975. Working with the ICRC delegates, the Magen David Adom was able to fit 37 invalids with artificial limbs.

Hospital and medical situation in the occupied territories

In 1975, as in 1971, 1972 and 1974, an ICRC medical delegate made a detailed study of the hospital and medical situation in the occupied territories in the Gaza Strip, Sinai and on the Golan Heights. For the first time for many years, this survey was extended to the West Bank of the Jordan.

During this mission, which ran from the beginning of April to August, the ICRC medical delegate visited some 240 infirmaries, clinics, medical centres and hospitals.

Reports drawn up for the authorities of Israel and of the Arab countries concerned contained the comments and suggestions of the medical delegate, who had been afforded every facility in performing his task. Several discussions were held with the competent authorities on the subject of the problems reported.

Population shifts

There was only one Arab population shift in 1975. The Bedouin tribes of the Ein Sadr region in the Sinai were moved to El Rissan and El Malha. The authorities of the Occupying Power informed the ICRC delegation that this move was necessary for military reasons. The operation affected some 1,800 persons who were helped by the Israeli authorities to resettle. The delegates satisfied themselves that this transfer was carried out under the best possible conditions and they regularly visited the tribes in their new places of residence. The ICRC provided them with some relief food supplies, drawing in particular on its flour stocks. It also asked the Israeli authorities to allow this community to return to its home territory as soon as the reasons given for this move ceased to exist.

Incidentally, the withdrawal agreement between Egypt and Israel made it possible for several Bedouin tribes to return to their original locations from which they had been routed in 1967 either by the war or by the establishment of military zones.

Unsolved problems covered by the Fourth Convention

The ICRC is concerned to see that the Fourth Convention is respected in the occupied territories and it approaches the Occupying Power whenever it notes that that Power is not respecting some obligation, or civilian right, specified in the Convention.

Despite earlier approaches, renewed in 1975, some problems have still not been solved.

- Applicability of the Fourth Convention: the ICRC is of the opinion that it is applicable *in toto* in the three occupied territories and it cannot accept that a duly ratified international treaty may be suspended at the wish of one of the parties.
- Destruction of houses: Despite all the efforts made by the ICRC on the basis of Arts. 33, 49 and 53 of the Fourth Convention, the destruction of houses continued. In 1975, the ICRC was informed of 57 homes destroyed and eleven bricked up. These measures affected more than 300 persons. The ICRC provided those victims who did not immediately find a new home with basic necessities (tents, blankets, food). The ICRC has constantly reminded the Israeli authorities that it is opposed to such destruction.
- Expulsions: Referring to Art. 49 of the Fourth Convention, the ICRC delegation protested against the expulsion to Lebanon, on 18 April, of five civilian Arab detainees who had until then been under administrative arrest. The ICRC also transmitted to the Israeli authorities requests by persons expelled before 1975 to return to their homes in the occupied territories. The ICRC, which had already tried to prevent these expulsions, supported these requests.
- Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Iraq

In spring 1975, the ICRC had to cease the relief work it had started towards the end of 1974 to help the victims of the conflict raging in Iraqi Kurdistan (see Annual Report 1974, p. 54).

What in fact happened was that, following the signing of an agreement between Iran and Iraq, the Iranian Government informed the ICRC that although it had no objection to the ICRC's continuing its relief work in Iraqi Kurdistan, it was necessary to obtain the approval of the Iraqi Government which—on the basis of the new situation created by the agreement—asked the ICRC to cease its humanitarian work.

The ICRC also gave up supervising the repatriation to Iraq of Kurdish refugees in Iran at the request of the Iraqi Government which had originally entrusted it with that task at the end of February.

The 159 Iraqi soldiers held by the Kurds, and who had been visited by two ICRC delegates in January 1975, were released by their captors to the Iranian authorities which repatriated them with the help of the Iraqi Red Crescent.

Lebanon

The situation in Lebanon grew steadily worse from April through December as fighting intensified between the opposing groups. It was only at the end of October however that the hospitals and dispensaries, overwhelmed by the victims, suddenly encountered critical shortages of medicines, bandages, blood, plasma and other blood substitutes. The ICRC acted quickly to help deal with the situation.

The ICRC had maintained an office in Beirut since 1967, serving as a regional logistics base. Its most recent major activity had resulted from the outbreak of the conflict in Cyprus in 1974. As the Lebanese situation worsened, the office had only one delegate and some local personnel to deal with demands made upon the ICRC for a large-scale operation.

This operation started on 2 May with the dispatch to Beirut of a head of delegation, a doctor, a relief specialist and a radio operator.

The ICRC team was immediately given the support of the major institutions concerned, which set up an ad hoc committee to deal with the situation. The committee included representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Lebanese Red Cross, associations of private hospitals and pharmacists, the Lebanese Medical Order, the Western Beirut Medical Association and the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

The ICRC medical delegate drew up a list of the most urgent requirements. Thanks to the joint efforts of the chief medical officer and Relief Division of the ICRC, the Swiss Army and the Swiss Civil Defence, it was possible to assemble within 24 hours the first shipment of 16 tons of relief supplies—mainly

medical—worth 487,000 Swiss francs. The shipment left for Paris on 6 November, where it was transferred to a plane for Beirut.

By the end of 1975, relief shipments by the ICRC, the Swiss Government, 22 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and a private organization, reached a value of 1.77 million Swiss francs.¹ These supplies were distributed as they were received, on the basis of a plan drawn up by the ad hoc committee in consultation with all of the recipient groups.

Due in large part to these shipments, the deficiencies which prompted the ICRC intervention were soon overcome, with bilateral aid also playing a large part. Despite the continued fighting, the medical and health situation in Lebanon was under control at the end of the year, making it possible to reduce again to some extent the ICRC delegation, leaving in Beirut the head of the delegation, a relief delegate and some local personnel, including a radio operator.

It should be noted that relief did not constitute the sole activity of the ICRC during this phase of the emergency. Major work was also carried on by the Agency, which performed outstanding service (see page 31).

Disrespect for the protective emblem

The armed confrontations in Beirut created a virtually continuous condition of extreme danger, which considerably restricted the freedom of movement of the ICRC delegates, just as it did for the population as a whole.

It is sad to report the protective emblems, the red cross and the red crescent, were not respected. In some instances, they even became the targets of gunfire.

The worst of these incidents occurred on 23 May when a convoy of medical vehicles of the ICRC, the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" came under heavy fire. One of the drivers was seriously wounded.

After this incident, the ICRC, the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" issued a joint statement, to remind all the people of the nature of the protective emblems and the obligation to respect them.

This appeal produced no change in the situation however, a fact which the ICRC delegates had to reckon with. This resulted in a degree of paralysis in their activities, except during periods of truce.

Under these conditions, none of the measures usually undertaken in such situations to assist the victims—in particular the evacuation of the wounded under ICRC protection—could be carried out.

¹ To this amount should be added the sum of 545,800 Swiss francs, the value of the food provided by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation (see page 27).