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# I. OPERATIONS

This section of the Report begins with the principal operations carried out by the ICRC to assure protection and assistance to the victims of armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (Lebanon, the Israel-Arab conflict, Western Sahara), Africa (Ogaden and southern Africa), Indo-China and Cyprus. Except for the Ogaden conflict, these activities were continuations of work begun in previous years, sometimes as long as ten years ago, as in the case of the Middle East.

This is followed by a chapter describing the activities of the regional delegations of the ICRC, dealing primarily with their work in visiting persons detained for political reasons.

Subsequent chapters are devoted to the services providing support for such operations, the Relief Division, Medical Division and Radiocommunications.

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In 1977, ICRC delegates visited about 400 prisoners of war (mainly from the Ogaden and western Sahara conflicts) and some 3,400 civilian detainees (Israel and the occupied territories).

In addition, in 22 countries, they had access to 244 places of detention in which nearly 14,000 persons were detained for political reasons. In this connection, it is worthy of note that for the first time ICRC delegates visited detainees of this category in Iran. The ICRC also started a large-scale action in Argentina.

The ICRC was involved as well in helping tens of thousands of persons who had fled their native countries and were in transit camps in Africa and south-east Asia. It also enabled 737 Taiwan nationals to leave Viet Nam for Taipei, in five aerial repatriation operations.

In the field of assistance, the ICRC sent relief to some fifty countries, to an overall value of 46.6 million Swiss francs.

## Lebanon

After the cease-fire and the arrival of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) in October 1976, relative calm prevailed in Lebanon. This situation led the ICRC—which acts as a relief agency only in periods of emergency—to reduce by stages its assistance activities throughout the country.

On the other hand, despite the Chtaura agreements signed on 30 July 1977 and the cease-fire accepted on 26 September, the southern part of the country continued to be the scene of fighting between hostile groups, especially in the regions of

Marjayoun, Nabatiyeh and Bent Jbeil. The ICRC therefore had to continue and even intensify its relief distribution and medical assistance in this part of the country.

At the same time, the ICRC continued the protective activities undertaken from the beginning of the conflict on behalf of detained and missing persons.

In 1977 the ICRC maintained its delegation in Lebanon which was composed of three sub-delegations, at Beirut, Tripoli and Jounieh, with headquarters in Beirut. The situation in southern Lebanon made it necessary to open a bureau at Tyre in April. On the other hand, the sub-delegation at Limassol, Cyprus, which had been concerned with the forwarding of relief by sea, was closed at the end of June as part of the general reduction in ICRC activities in Lebanon.

At the end of the year, ICRC personnel in Lebanon consisted of 18 delegates and other staff members and 54 locally hired employees.

## Relief

*MATERIAL ASSISTANCE.* — Following the cease-fire which entered into force in October 1976, the needs of the population for material relief were somewhat modified. Furthermore, governmental institutions whose activities had been impeded or even suspended because of the fighting, were able to resume their work in this field. This change in the situation induced the ICRC, which until that time had been distributing a large proportion of the humanitarian assistance provided by the international community for the victims of the events, to review its assistance programme.

A division of labour was worked out among the Lebanese Government High Committee for Relief, the Office for Social Development (OSD), the specialized international agencies and the ICRC, enabling the ICRC to disengage itself to some extent and to transfer its work of delivering and distributing relief to other institutions.

One consequence of this reorganization was the closing, at the end of June, of the sub-delegation at Limassol, Cyprus, from which relief reaching Cyprus from different continents was shipped to Lebanon aboard the "Kalliopi", shuttling between Cyprus and Lebanon. As a reserve for emergencies, however, the ICRC temporarily maintained in Cyprus a stockpile of 367 tons of relief material worth 1.1 million Swiss francs.

The ICRC continued to provide supplementary assistance when necessary, in particular to several thousand persons who had fled their villages due to fighting in the south to take refuge elsewhere in the country, where the OSD assumed responsibility for them, aided by the material assistance of the ICRC.

Although the ICRC could gradually reduce its activities in Lebanon as a whole, this was not true in the south. This region which had been ravaged by fighting at intervals throughout the year could not be supplied with food and medicine by the Lebanese institutions. The ICRC therefore intensified its activities in the area, opening a bureau at Tyre to co-ordinate assistance. So far as possible, as the fighting continued, ICRC delegates regularly visited some sixty villages in southern Lebanon to distribute relief arriving by truck from Beirut. These distributions virtually exhausted ICRC supplies, including the 367-ton reserve in Cyprus, this having been transferred to Lebanon at the beginning of September. The ICRC did not discontinue its work of distribution however, but carried on with foods supplied by the Lebanese government and blankets, clothing, etc., from UNICEF.

### Medical assistance

The ICRC continued its programme of medical assistance in close co-operation with the Ministry of Health, the Medical Aid Committee, the Lebanese Red Cross, the "Palestinian Red Crescent", the WHO and other international organizations.

In this field as well, the ICRC made a re-assessment of its activities to take into account the health situation after the cease-fire.

*DISPENSARIES AND HOSPITALS.* — At the request of the Ministry of Health, the ICRC undertook a survey of the situation of Lebanese dispensaries, to help the government reorganize its distribution system and to evaluate total needs. Pending the conclusion of this reorganization, the ICRC continued during the first half of the year to supply a large number of dispensaries with medicines and medical material; during the last half of the year it concentrated on assisting dispensaries and hospitals which the Lebanese structures could not reach, especially those of the south.

The ICRC medical team at Tyre made systematic visits to villages in the region to observe health conditions. It was concerned in particular with detecting and preventing possible epidemics by instituting, in co-operation with the Lebanese government which supplied the vaccines, a poliomyelitis vaccination programme for children.

### War disabled

Programmes for the rehabilitation of war disabled, begun at the end of 1976, were continued in 1977.

*PROSTHESES.* — A survey was carried out by a specialist to determine on the one hand the number of persons needing

prostheses and on the other hand to explore the technical facilities available for fitting amputees with artificial limbs. The survey found approximately 900 persons in need of prostheses.

To carry out this programme, the ICRC appealed for international assistance. The Government of the Netherlands and the British and Swiss Red Cross Societies responded, making it possible, on several occasions, to send teams of technicians, physiotherapists and ergotherapists to various rehabilitation centres. A total of 565 prostheses were fitted by the British and Netherlands teams. The Swiss team worked for a year in adjusting the prostheses and rehabilitating the invalids.

*PARAPLEGICS.* — At the request of the Lebanese government, the ICRC sent a specialist to Lebanon at the end of 1977 to assess the situation with regard to paraplegics and make appropriate proposals for action to the government.

Wheelchairs were distributed to the most seriously afflicted victims.

*OCULAR PROSTHESES.* — Another aspect of rehabilitation concerned victims who had partially lost their eyesight. A specialist in artificial eyes made two visits to Lebanon to fit and adjust about 380 ocular prostheses.

### Field hospitals

The field hospital which had been closed on 11 December 1976 was maintained in a state of readiness until the end of February 1977. At the end of June, with the agreement of the National Scandinavian Societies which had donated it, the equipment available was handed over to the Shiite community for the hospital it had opened in the area. This area, which had previously had no medical facilities, is now partly populated by refugees.

### Relief statistics

From 1 January to 31 December 1977, the ICRC delivered 6,293 tons of relief supplies (97 tons of medicines and medical material, 6,107 tons of food and 89 tons of clothing, blankets and miscellaneous material) to a total value of 22,308,400 Swiss francs, including the food aid contributed by the EEC (see Table on page 32).

### Lebanese displaced persons in Syria

From the beginning of the events in Lebanon in April 1975, thousands of persons sought refuge in Syria. In co-operation

with the Syrian authorities, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" (PRC) the ICRC distributed emergency relief to them.

This action consisted at the outset of giving mattresses, blankets and powdered milk to the displaced families. In the spring of 1977, the ICRC was able to diversify this distribution programme by including basic foodstuffs, clothing for children and medicines. In addition, the ICRC gave a complete stock of medicines to each of the SARC and PRC dispensaries which were giving free care to the Lebanese refugees.

During the year, more than 1,000 families, composed of about 6,000 persons, benefited from ICRC aid consisting of 40 tons of relief material worth 143,800 Swiss francs.

Co-operation by the ICRC with the SARC and PRC also extended to the work of the Central Tracing Agency, with the aim of finding persons reported missing in the course of the events.

## Protection

From the outset of hostilities, the ICRC intervened repeatedly with the political and military leaders of the various parties and armed groups in Lebanon to remind them of their obligations concerning the treatment of prisoners, in conformity with the spirit of the Geneva Conventions.

As it had done throughout 1976, the ICRC continued to visit prisoners detained by the various belligerent groups in Lebanon.

ICRC delegates accordingly made several visits to a score of persons in the hands of the "Lebanese forces" at Kleya and at Marjayoun, in southern Lebanon. They also visited a prisoner held by the "Rejectionist Front" at Beirut and three prisoners held by the FATH at Dardghaya, Tyre and Rachidiyet.

The crisis in the country led to the arrest of a certain number of persons by the authorities. In response to requests from the families of the persons arrested, the ICRC made approaches at the highest levels to Lebanese and Syrian authorities and to the ADF.

In January 1977, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, a member of the ICRC, went to Lebanon and was received by Mr. Elias Sarkis, President of the Republic, for a discussion of humanitarian problems resulting from the conflict. Mr. Naville also met the Prime Minister, the President of the Lebanese Red Cross and the President of the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

In addition, Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC, visited Damascus at the end of June at the invitation of the Syrian Government and had talks with Mr. Hafez al Assad, President of the Republic, and with the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Health. The purpose of these talks was to improve co-operation between the ADF and Syrian authorities with the ICRC and to facilitate the traditional work of the ICRC.

In his discussion with the Syrian President, the President of the ICRC raised the question of missing persons who were believed to be detained in Syria, 400 such cases having been reported by the ICRC delegation in Lebanon. Mr. Hay expressed his desire to receive a list of these persons, in order to reassure their families. He also offered the services of the ICRC to visit such detainees and to deliver messages from them to their relatives. At the end of the year, these offers by the President of the ICRC had not resulted in effective action to protect these persons.

In Lebanon, following a number of talks with the commander in chief of the ADF, the ICRC obtained a list of 12 persons in the hands of the ADF, three of whom were visited on 5 October and were later released. Other approaches were made in an attempt to visit the other detainees listed, who had been transferred to a prison under the jurisdiction of the Interior Security Forces (ISF).

## Searching for missing persons

At the beginning of 1977, the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) had three bureaux, connected respectively with the sub-delegations at Beirut, Jounieh and Tripoli. In October, the Agency in Tripoli ceased operations and its activities were taken over by the Beirut bureau. The sub-delegation at Tyre served as a relay point for the exchange of family messages and for the forwarding of tracing requests to the delegation in Beirut.

The Agency exerted great efforts, in co-operation with delegations in Lebanon and Syria, to draw up complete lists of missing persons and to transmit information to their families.

During the first part of the year, the Agency bureaux in Lebanon still had a very large number of cases of missing persons to deal with, especially from the camp of Tel-al-Zaatar. Most of these cases had already been the subject of unsuccessful individual investigations. After further investigations had been made, the Agency bureaux drew up lists which were handed over to the various parties concerned, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and to the liaison bureau of the ADF which had offered its co-operation in the effort to locate missing persons. This procedure led to the solution of a number of cases.

A great number of cases nevertheless remained unsolved. Starting in June, therefore, the Agency bureaux in Lebanon started to re-examine every pending file and went back to the persons who had originally asked for the searches, in order to draw up a general summary.

The bureaux in Lebanon, even after postal communications had been restored between Lebanon and foreign countries, had to assume responsibility for exchanges of family messages, especially to and from persons in the southern part of the country, due to the continued fighting.



The Agency bureaus, as part of their work of reuniting families, were also active in transferring members of separated families from one zone to another.

Lastly, the ICRC delegation in Damascus, in co-operation with the Agency in Lebanon, took over all the cases of displaced Lebanese persons in Syria.

### *STATISTICS*

Cases handled	42,853
Inquiries instituted	1,941
Positive results	1,850
Negative results	647
Family messages exchanged	28,961

### **Financing the action**

The ICRC action in Lebanon would not have been possible without the confidence accorded to it by many governments, National Societies, international organizations and individuals, and without the substantial material assistance they provided.

In 1977, donations received by the ICRC amounted to 3,135,940 Swiss francs in cash and more than 22,300,000 francs in kind. The list of cash contributors is on pages 68-69.

Contributors who made gifts in kind for the ICRC relief action in 1977 were:

*RED CROSSES:* Canada, Denmark, France, German Democratic Republic, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom.

*GOVERNMENTS:* Iraq, Switzerland

*OTHERS:* EEC, UNICEF, WHO, Caritas, Rotary Lyons, Association Suisse-Liban, Armenian Sanatorium.

## **Conflict between Israel and the Arab countries**

### **Re-appraisal of activities**

After ten years of activity in the countries directly involved in the Israel-Arab conflict, the ICRC in 1977 considered it necessary to re-examine its action, especially in Israel and the occupied territories. Since the cease-fire which followed the