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MIDDLE EAST

In 1979, the ICRC maintained all of its Middle East delegations, in Egypt, Israel and the occupied territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, its activities being connected mainly with the Israel-Arab conflict and the internal Lebanese conflict. In addition, the ICRC conducted an assistance action in the Yemen Arab Republic. It also maintained a delegation in Iran which took action in the fields of protection and assistance in connection with the troubles occurring in that country.

Mission of the President and members of the Committee

The President of the ICRC carried out a mission in Saudi Arabia at the beginning of April, together with Mr. Jean Hoefliger, delegate-general for the Middle East, and Mr. Serge Nessi, head of the Financing Division. The principal purpose of this mission was a quest for funds. The ICRC President was received by H. M. King Khaled and high Saudi Arabian personalities.

At the invitation of the President of the Jordan Red Crescent, Mr. Richard Pestalozzi, member of the Committee and Vice-President of the ICRC, and Mr. Henrik Beer, Secretary-General of the League, went to Jordan in March to participate in the inauguration of a new Red Crescent hospital building in Amman, a ceremony which was also attended by representatives of the Norwegian and Finnish National Societies.

Mrs. Denise Bindschedler-Robert, a member of the Committee, made a visit in October to Israel and the occupied territories during which she discussed ICRC activities with various officials.

Israel and occupied territories

In 1979, the ICRC carried out two types of activity in Israel and the occupied territories. One type is based on the Fourth Geneva Convention relating to the protection of civilian populations, with visits to Arab civilian detainees, observation of the respect given to the judicial rights of accused persons, transfer of persons and of Red Cross messages across the demarcation lines, intervention in the event of the destruction of houses, or implantations or expulsions, and assistance to protected persons. (It is to be recalled in this connection that the ICRC considers that all the conditions exist for the application of the Fourth Convention in connection with the conflict between Israel and Arab countries, whereas the Israeli authorities maintain that the Fourth Convention is not legally applicable, while putting it into effect in practice). The other type is based on the Third Convention relating to prisoners of war. (These activities dealt with the consequences of the Israeli

intervention in Lebanon in March 1978 and are reported upon under that heading.)

Problems encountered by the ICRC delegates, especially in the field of protection, were taken up with Israeli authorities by the head of the ICRC delegation in Israel and the occupied territories, in particular with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Moshe Dayan, the Minister of Defence, Mr. Ezer Weizmann, the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Yosef Burg, and the Minister of Justice, Mr. Shmuel Tamir.

Activities for detainees

Throughout 1979, the ICRC continued its protection action for the benefit of persons from the occupied territories and from Arab countries detained in Israel or in occupied territories. Its delegates had interviews without witness with security detainees under interrogation, to whom they had had access since 1978, and with other categories of detainees (sentenced prisoners, persons awaiting trial and persons in administrative detention).

DETAINEES UNDER INTERROGATION. — As stated in the preceding Annual Report, the Israeli authorities and the ICRC had held open the possibility of re-examining the arrangements provided for in the agreement of November 1977, which entered into effect on 1 January 1978. After the ICRC, in 1978, proposed modifications relating to visits to detainees under interrogation, the agreement was reconsidered by the two parties and, in amended form, took effect on 18 March 1979. The amendments dealt mainly with two points: the time elapsing before notification of an arrest and the nature of the interview with a detainee. Any arrest, under the new provisions, had to be reported to the ICRC within a maximum period of 12 days instead of 14 days, so that the first visit could in fact take place within 14 days after the arrest, as had been provided for in the agreement of November 1977. Furthermore, when detainees had been under interrogation for more than 28 days, the ICRC delegates were no longer limited to enquiring only about their health and identity.

Desiring to extend its action of protection as far as possible, the ICRC proposed further amendments in October 1979. It asked that notifications of changes in the status of detainees (such as persons awaiting trial or persons sentenced being subjected to renewed interrogation) should be provided for in the agreement and that it be permitted to visit those concerned within 7 days. It asked as well for other facilities, including the possibility for delegates to examine the conditions of detention of detainees under interrogation and the possibility of reducing the period before notification to 10 days. At the end of the year, the Israeli authorities had not replied to these proposals.

Persons in East Jerusalem who were arrested for reasons of security had still not received the benefit in 1979 of the agreement governing ICRC visits to detainees under interrogation, despite repeated requests by the ICRC. Their arrests were therefore still not reported to the ICRC, but the ICRC visited them.

From 1 September 1979, ICRC delegates were no longer authorized to use detainees as interpreters on the occasions of visits to those undergoing interrogation. In consequence, the ICRC employed some Arab-speaking delegates.

In 1979, the ICRC made 2,724 visits to 1,176 detainees under interrogation.

OTHER DETAINEES. — At the same time, the ICRC continued its visits to other detainees, for the most part persons arrested for security reasons. The delegates went to 14 places of detention in Israel and the occupied territories and saw about 3,100 detainees. Each prison was visited, as a rule, every three months. As usual reports on these visits were sent to the occupying power and to the countries of origin of the detainees.

At the end of 1979, there were 23 administrative detainees as compared to about 30 at the end of the year before. In 1979, 14 Lebanese nationals arrested by the Israeli armed forces during an operation in southern Lebanon in March 1978 and placed under administrative detention were released (see also page 54).

ASSISTANCE TO DETAINEES AND THEIR FAMILIES. — The ICRC continued during 1979 to provide material assistance to detainees and their families. The detainees received parcels of fruit every month, along with books and magazines. They were given 2,618 parcels of summer underwear and 305 parcels of winter underwear. The neediest among them were given money to enable them to make purchases at the prison canteens. In addition, the ICRC paid for various medical devices and prostheses for 355 detainees.

Families of detainees were provided with free transport enabling them to visit their detained relatives in the places of detention. A total of 31,409 passengers benefited from this travel assistance in 1979.

Assistance to detainees and their families amounted to a total of 376,600 Swiss francs during the year.

ATTENDANCE AT TRIALS. — The ICRC also assisted protected persons in connection with judicial proceedings against them. Ever since 1973, the Israeli authorities had been notifying the ICRC of cases being brought before military courts. It had been agreed that notification should reach the ICRC at least one week before the opening of the trial and should include as a minimum the name of the defendant, designation of the court, the charge against the detainee and the date and time of the first hearing. The ICRC has repeated its request that the notification period be respected.

In 1979, the legal delegate in the ICRC delegation in Israel attended 36 sessions of security trials before military tribunals in Golan, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the Jordan and

Lod. He maintained regular contacts with the attorneys for the detainees, the prosecutors and Israeli judicial authorities. It must nevertheless be noted that the ICRC delegate was not allowed in the courtroom of military tribunals during the important phase of the judicial procedure designated as "mishpat zuta". It is during this phase that the tribunal decides upon the admissibility of confessions by the defendant when the latter asserts that these were obtained under pressure. Formal requests were made that the legal delegate should also be present at this phase of the procedure. Such authorization had not been obtained at the end of 1979.

The ICRC also renewed its requests to the responsible authorities to the effect that statements by defendants should not have to be written in Hebrew, a language with which they were generally unfamiliar, and that the decision already taken by the Israeli authorities on this matter should actually be put into practice.

Destruction of houses

The destruction of eight houses was reported to the ICRC in 1979, and the immurement of entrances to six others. These acts took place in East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip.

The ICRC repeated its protests to the Israeli authorities since these acts violate Article 53 of the Fourth Convention.

Expulsions

On the basis of Article 49 of the Fourth Convention, the ICRC protested to Israeli authorities on two occasions in 1979 against the expulsion of residents of the occupied territories, i.e. a West Bank student and the mayor of Nablus. In the latter case, the expulsion order was rescinded. The ICRC was able to visit both of the persons concerned during their detention.

Israeli settlements in occupied territories

The ICRC believes that the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are incompatible with Articles 27 and 49 of the Fourth Convention.

In view of the major dimensions of these settlements, the ICRC is concerned about the humanitarian consequences for protected persons in the occupied territories. Its delegates have therefore remained in constant contact with the persons affected and have intervened with the Israeli authorities when these settlements have caused hardship.

Travel across the demarcation lines

In agreement with the responsible authorities in all the countries concerned, the ICRC delegates in the occupied territories and in the neighbouring Arab countries arranged for the travel of certain categories of persons across the demarcation lines. These included students from the occupied territories on their way to Damascus or Cairo to continue their studies or returning for holidays at home, visitors and

pilgrims, persons being reunited with their families, released detainees being returned to their countries of origin, and persons who had entered the occupied territories without authorization. As the need arose, the ICRC delegations also arranged for the transfer of vehicles across the demarcation lines.

The following operations took place under ICRC auspices in 1979:

BETWEEN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF GAZA/ SINAI AND CAIRO. — Seven operations were organized to provide for the passage of 1,381 persons from Egypt into the occupied territories and 893 persons in the opposite direction. These included 488 students coming from Cairo and 109 returning to Cairo. These operations also made possible three family reunions, with three persons from Egypt joining relatives in the Gaza Strip. Such operations took place at El Khirba up to 16 May and at El Arish after 13 June.

BETWEEN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY OF GOLAN AND DAMASCUS. — These operations took place at Kuneitra in the United Nations buffer zone on the Golan heights and made possible 10 family reunions (7 into Golan and 3 to Damascus). At the same time, 47 students crossed on their way to Damascus to begin or continue their studies and 47 entered Golan to spend their holidays.

BETWEEN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK AND AMMAN. — A total of 26 persons were transferred under ICRC auspices, 16 to Amman and 10 to the West Bank (consisting of detainees released after serving their sentences or freed in advance, persons who had infiltrated across the lines, mental patients, etc.). These operations took place at the Allenby Bridge.

AT THE FRONTIER BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON. — A total of 27 persons (released detainees and infiltrators), the body of one dead person and 6 Lebanese civilians who had been treated in Israeli hospitals following the events in southern Lebanon, were transferred from Israel to Lebanon at the frontier town of Roshanikra.

Family reuniting

Under the procedure established by the Israeli authorities, requests concerning family reunions involving the entry of persons into the occupied territories had to be made directly to the authorities by members of the families already living in the occupied territories. It was only in the event of a refusal by the Israeli authorities and at the request of the family concerned that the ICRC, under exceptional circumstances, intervened with the authorities.

In 1979, 32 such requests were made (15 for Golan, 15 for the West Bank and 2 for the Gaza Strip). Permission was given in 15 cases; 7 were refused; 7 remained without response at the end of the year and decisions were suspended in 3 other cases after visiting permission had been granted for 1 year.

For earlier cases on which decisions had been pending, 15 replies were obtained.

Central Tracing Agency

Central Tracing Agency investigations were conducted in the attempt to locate missing civilians and soldiers. In 1979, delegates submitted to the appropriate authorities 10 requests for information about military personnel who had disappeared during the hostilities. The Agency received 6 negative replies to these requests and 17 negative replies concerning cases submitted earlier. In addition, 134 requests for information about civilians, presumably arrested or reported missing, were submitted to the authorities. There were 65 positive replies (54 persons having been located in prisons) and 7 negative replies.

Delegates also arranged the exchange of Red Cross messages and transfer of money between members of separated families, especially between detainees and their families. In 1979, 5,350 messages were delivered to detainees and 11,360 to families in about fifteen Arab countries. All these activities were carried out in co-operation with ICRC delegations in nearby countries and with the assistance of National Societies in the countries concerned.

In 1979, the Agency transmitted 2,134 family messages between Israel and the occupied territories and Arab countries; between civilian internees in Israel or the occupied territories and their families in non-adjacent Arab countries. In addition, there were 235 requests for searches, coming mainly from civilian internees in Israel and the occupied territories who had lost all contact with their families. These were sent to the Agency in Geneva, which was able to send replies in 90% of all the cases, most of them positive.

Help for invalids

Since 1972, the Magen David Adom has been responsible for administering a fund established by the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany to finance the purchase of prostheses for invalids in the Gaza Strip. The role of the ICRC has been both to transmit the funds to the Magen David Adom and to present cases in need of such help. In 1979, 15 invalids benefited from this action.

Food assistance

The ICRC continued its food assistance to needy civilians in the occupied territories and to displaced persons in Jordan and Syria who had fled the conflicts of 1967 and 1973. The food came from the European Economic Community and from the Swiss Confederation. Distributions were made under the supervision of ICRC delegates with the assistance, in the occupied territories, of the Israeli Ministry for Social Affairs and various charitable organizations and, in Syria and Jordan, of the Red Crescent Societies (see Table, page 61).

Other activities

The ICRC delegation in Israel was also active in the dissemination of knowledge of the principles of international humanitarian law, arranging conferences and giving lectures as part of the training programme for guards and officers in the prison service. The legal delegate presided over two seminars on international humanitarian law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

ORGANIZATION. — To carry out the work described above, the ICRC maintained its structure in Israel and the occupied territories, with a delegation in Tel Aviv and two sub-delegations, one in Jerusalem and one in the Gaza Strip. A delegate based in Tel Aviv was responsible for the occupied territory in Golan. In addition, the ICRC had various offices, staffed by local personnel, in different localities on the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip, at El Arish and in the Sinai (the latter being closed at the end of May). At the end of 1979, there were 14 delegates and 38 locally recruited employees.

New relations between Israel and Egypt

Following the March 26 agreement between Egypt and Israel, various changes were made in the activities of the ICRC in relation to these two countries.

Concerned by the cessation of operations for travel between Egypt and the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai, and also by humanitarian problems which might result from the restoration of the occupied territories in the Sinai, the ICRC asked the Egyptian authorities for permission to maintain its office in El Arish after this locality was returned to Egypt. The Egyptian authorities agreed, and on 26 May the office at El Arish was placed under the control of the ICRC delegation in Cairo.

A single operation for the transfer of persons took place at El Arish. Later, when differences of view developed between Israel and Egypt on the need for the presence of a neutral intermediary to supervise these movements, several persons remained blocked in Cairo. Since they were protected persons under the terms of the Fourth Convention, the ICRC intervened repeatedly with the two governments, insisting that the transfers should be carried out. In particular, in a note delivered on 29 June to the Israeli and Egyptian authorities, the ICRC expressed its concern about the difficulties delaying the transfer of a large number of protected persons and placed itself at the disposal of the parties to seek a solution to the problem. Despite all the requests made, no further transfers took place under ICRC auspices up to the end of the year. A number of the persons affected, however, were able by their own means to return either to Egypt or to the occupied territories.

The subject of assistance to needy families in Sinai who had been receiving material aid from the Israeli Ministry of Social Affairs, was taken up with the Egyptian Government by the delegate-general during a visit to Cairo. As in previous talks

between the Egyptian authorities and the Cairo delegation, the delegate-general reminded his interlocutors, in particular Mrs. Jehan Sadate, President of the Egyptian Red Crescent, and Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, that the ICRC would be glad to give the Egyptian authorities the benefit of the experience it had gained in social and medical fields in the course of its 12-year presence in the occupied Sinai and inform them of the humanitarian problems it had encountered in that region. This proposal was accepted. Accordingly, in the company of Egyptian authorities, the ICRC delegates in Cairo were able to make their first visit to the Sinai at the end of the year.

The ICRC repeatedly drew the attention both of Israeli and Egyptian authorities to the humanitarian problems which might be created for part of the civilian population by modifications in the lines of demarcation following successive Israeli withdrawals. Among these problems would be access to supplies, to water points, pasturage, etc.

Consequence of the Israeli intervention in Lebanon in March 1978

Following the Israeli intervention in southern Lebanon in March 1978 (see Annual Report for 1978, page 26), the ICRC undertook various protection activities for the benefit of:

- persons captured by the Israeli armed forces, whom it visited and some of whom had been repatriated (at the end of 1978, 14 of these persons remained in detention in Israel under the terms of an administrative decree), and
- an Israeli soldier arrested in Lebanon and held by the "People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command". The ICRC visited this detainee twice in 1978.

Following up these 1978 efforts, the ICRC made a further visit to the Israeli prisoner of war in January and renewed its representations to the parties concerned, who finally agreed to a simultaneous release of prisoners.

This operation took place in Geneva on 14 March under the auspices of the ICRC which, at the request of both parties, organized the procedure, with the assistance of the Swiss authorities. The exchange involved the Israeli prisoner of war in the hands of the "People's Front" and 76 civilian Arab detainees in Israeli hands. All had been visited once more by the ICRC delegates before their release. While 66 of the civilian Arab detainees and the Israeli soldier were taken by plane to Geneva, the other 10 Arab detainees were released in the occupied territories and were accompanied by ICRC delegates as they returned to their families.

On 8 February, the ICRC repatriated 14 persons who had been arrested by the Israeli armed forces in southern Lebanon and were still detained in Israel.

Lebanon

The year 1979 was relatively calm for Lebanon, and the activities of the ICRC were correspondingly reduced as compared to the year before. The delegation headquarters

agreement with the Lebanese Government, signed on 1 April 1978, was ratified by the Council of Ministers and was signed on 2 March 1979 by the President of the Republic.

Protection

The ICRC continued its protection activities in Lebanon, calling to the attention of the political and military leaders of the different parties and armed groups the fundamental humanitarian principles for the treatment of prisoners. The ICRC had access to some of the prisoners or hostages in the hands of these parties. Such visits were essentially limited however to ascertaining the names of the captives, giving them moral comfort and, in certain cases, some material aid.

For example, the delegates were able to see some of the persons detained by the two opposing Christian factions. A total of 164 persons were liberated under the auspices of the ICRC. At the end of the year, however, some detainees held by each side had not been released and had not been visited by the ICRC.

Medical assistance

The ICRC undertook limited medical assistance (surveys in dispensaries and hospitals, provision of medical material, transfers of wounded persons) for victims of the conflicts between the different parties within the country and of the Israel-Arab conflict. Most of the assistance was provided in southern Lebanon and notably in the regions of Hasbaya, Nabatiye and Saïda which, in January, April, July and August, were the scenes of Israeli military operations and conflicts between Palestinian forces and Christian militias. The ICRC assistance was limited, since larger-scale intervention was not required in view of the existing infrastructure. The medical delegate visited southern Lebanon during the troubles in January and a female nurse was kept at the sub-delegation in Tyre until July.

The emergency centre opened in August 1978 at Achrafieh in East Beirut was closed on 31 January 1979 and its medical material was distributed to various dispensaries.

In between periods of combat, the ICRC made regular tours throughout the country to assess the situation in government dispensaries, sections of the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent". This was not only in order to prepare for new confrontations but also to evaluate the scope of medical problems and report them to the appropriate authorities. Accordingly, the ICRC took part periodically in working sessions which brought together governmental bodies, such as the Committee for Medical Aid, and representatives of such international organizations as WHO and UNICEF. During peaceful periods, the ICRC delegates were also engaged in transferring sick and handicapped persons from one zone to another within the country.

In addition, the ICRC gave material assistance, in the form of medicines, medical equipment and financial aid both to the Lebanese Red Cross, which was somewhat short of resources

after the efforts it had exerted in the autumn of 1978, and to the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

In 1979, the value of medical aid to Lebanon, consisting of medicines, medical material and 77 wheel chairs, amounted to 570,035 Swiss francs.

Material assistance

The assistance was sealed-down towards the end of April since the criteria for intervention, especially the criterion of urgency, no longer prevailed in the greater part of the country, southern Lebanon excepted.

In Beirut and in the central and northern regions, assistance was limited to distributions, through the Office for Social Development and the Lebanese Red Cross, of blankets, milk, baby food and clothing to displaced families for children below the age of five years, and some relief for religious minority groups and foreigners (see Annual Report 1978, page 29). From the last days of May, the ICRC made only a few distributions of assistance to needy communities and families which had suffered very severely from the events.

In southern Lebanon, the ICRC undertook some actions in camps for Palestinian refugees. It also organized an operation for the benefit of some 1,800 Muslim and Christian orphans in the Marjayoun region for the holidays of Al Adha and Christmas.

At the same time, the ICRC was concerned about the situation of displaced people from the South who were taking refuge in the Saïda region. Survey missions found that governmental organizations, the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" could deal with the problem and the role of the ICRC was therefore limited to reporting needs.

In 1979, the ICRC distributed about 283 tons of relief goods, some of it purchased locally, worth 1,424,052 Swiss francs. The material included 205 tons of food, especially milk and baby food, 24 tons of clothing, including layettes, 24 tons of blankets and 28 tons of various other items. The material was handed over to the Lebanese Red Cross, the "Palestinian Red Crescent", and to other charitable organizations or distributed directly. It was provided by the ICRC, the Red Cross Societies of France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, the Governments of Luxembourg and Switzerland, various other organizations and a private donor.

Central Tracing Agency

The Agency bureau in Lebanon transmitted 10,448 family messages in 1979, inside the country and to delegations in other countries in the Middle East, and handled requests for information about persons who had disappeared or been arrested. In 1979, 236 investigations were undertaken, with positive results in 181 cases and negative results in 32. In addition, the bureau arranged the transfer of persons inside Lebanon or between Israel and Lebanon.

In Geneva, the Agency transmitted 131 family messages and dealt with 218 investigations relating to Lebanon. In observance of the criteria of the ICRC, it provided 15 travel

documents, thus making possible the reuniting of separated families.

ORGANIZATION. — In view of reduced activities, the number of persons in the field was cut down from 18 delegates at the beginning of the year to 11 at the end of 1979. The number of locally recruited employees was reduced from 44 to 35.

At the beginning of 1979, the ICRC had a delegation at Beirut and three bureaux at Tyre, Achrafieh and Jounieh, directed by delegates, and a bureau in Tripoli staffed by two local employees. At the end of the year, activities in Tyre and Jounieh were attended to by delegates based in Beirut.

The bureau at Achrafieh was closed for some months during the year. Its reopening, and the opening of a bureau at Saïda, a region to which displaced persons from southern Lebanon were coming for safety, were decided upon because of the need to deal with the situation as a whole.

Activities of other ICRC delegations in the Middle East

CAIRO

Apart from activities relating to the Israelo-Arab conflict, which constituted the greater part of its work, the ICRC delegation in Cairo undertook various assistance actions—such as payment for medical treatments, financial support for a liberated detainee and for other needy persons. Its staff in 1979 consisted of 3 delegates and 9 locally recruited employees.

DAMASCUS

The Damascus delegation, with a head of delegation and 3 local employees, made several visits to two German nationals who had been detained in Syria after crossing the demarcation line from the occupied territory in Golan. Relief was given to them, together with Red Cross message forms enabling them to correspond with their families.

The ICRC also made approaches to the Syrian authorities seeking authorization to visit Lebanese nationals who had been arrested by the Arab peace-keeping force and subsequently detained in Syria. At the end of the year, the ICRC had not yet received a reply.

In the field of information, the head of the Damascus delegation, in co-operation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, gave several talks on the ICRC for the authorities and for local branches of the National Society.

AMMAN

Apart from the activities in connection with the Israelo-Arab conflict, the Amman delegation (consisting of a head of delegation, a radio operator and 6 locally recruited employees), undertook a protection action for the benefit of detainees in Jordan, pursuant to authorization for prison visits granted to the ICRC by the Jordanian authorities.

Two series of visits took place. The first was in February (17 places of detention) and the second in October (15 places of detention). A medical delegate took part in the first visits. The ICRC delegates were able to speak without witnesses with all the prisoners, to whom they gave various leisure articles amounting to a total value of 14,000 Swiss francs. Reports on the visits were sent to the authorities concerned.

Iran

At the beginning of the year, the ICRC continued its protection action for political detainees and persons arrested under the provisions of martial law during the reign of the Shah. After February, following the change of regime, the ICRC carried out its activities on behalf of persons arrested in connection with the events.

The ICRC also undertook a medical action in the course of the disturbances which broke out throughout the country during the change of regime.

Protection

VISITS TO PLACES OF DETENTION. — Prior to the change of regime, the ICRC made an additional visit in January to political detainees and other persons arrested under the provisions of martial law and held in the prison of Ghasr in Teheran. All of these persons were liberated when the regime changed.

The ICRC applied to the new civilian and religious authorities for authorization to continue its action of protection for persons arrested in connection with the events. A memorandum was accordingly submitted on 21 February to the new Prime Minister, Mr. Mehdi Bazargan, and to other high officials in the new Iranian Government. In June, the ICRC had not yet been able to resume its protection activities in a manner meeting its essential criteria. A visit to the Ghasr prison took place in March but it did not conform to the customary procedures, since the principle of interviews without witnesses was disputed during the visit. The delegate-general for the Middle East went to Teheran and had a discussion with the Prime Minister. At the end of August, the ICRC was authorized to visit, in accordance with its customary procedures, the prison of Evin in Teheran where approximately 750 persons were detained following the change of regime. A report on the visit was sent to the Iranian authorities, including the Prime Minister.

Efforts to gain access to all the places of detention in the country were rendered more difficult following the resignation of Mr. Bazargan's government. Nevertheless, at the end of the year, the ICRC had received a reply which was positive in principle.

The ICRC was also concerned with matters of judicial procedure and intervened on several occasions with the new Iranian Government.

AMERICAN HOSTAGES. — When the hostages were taken at the United States Embassy in Teheran on 4 November, the ICRC did not make formal approaches to the parties concerned inasmuch as a considerable number of intermediaries had already intervened, either to obtain the release of the hostages or to seek authorization to visit them. It was only at the end of the year that the ICRC, in view of the fact that not all of the hostages had been seen by various visitors, made its own approaches for the purpose of meeting all persons detained in the embassy.

EVENTS IN IRANIAN KURDISTAN. — In December, a delegate went to western Azerbaijan, an Iranian province populated by Kurds, to study the possibility of providing protection for victims of the events. The delegate met various local personalities, especially Kurds, with whom he discussed problems of protection. The initiative did not lead to the desired results.

Medical assistance

Concerned by the confrontations in various regions between the armed forces of the old regime and those opposing it, the ICRC at the beginning of January sent a medical delegate to Iran to assess the situation. In Teheran, he visited the main hospitals and medical supply stores and also made trips elsewhere, especially to Qazvin, which was particularly affected by the events. On the basis of this mission and contacts with doctors and with the Red Lion and Sun Society, it was considered that the existing infrastructure in terms of personnel and material was sufficient, at the time, to deal with the situation.

In the face of the growing magnitude of the disturbances affecting the entire country, particularly at the time of the change of regime in February, the ICRC felt it was necessary to give support to the efforts of the Iranian medical corps. Accordingly, on several occasions, it intervened with civilian and military authorities to urge that doctors and nurses be respected and that they should be able to carry out their work under normal conditions. In addition, at the request of the Iranian Medical Association, it launched an appeal for funds on 13 February which made it possible 4 days later to fly medical material, medicines and blood, donated by the ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross, to Teheran. A similar gift from the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany followed at the beginning of March. The value of this assistance action amounted to 454,700 Swiss francs, including transport.

The ICRC remained in close contact with Iranian medical circles and the Red Lion and Sun Society so as to be ready to intervene in case of need. A medical delegate was kept in Iran for this purpose during the first three months of the year.

The detainees visited in 1979 also had the benefit of ICRC medical assistance, since a medical delegate participated in the visits to the Ghasr and Evvin prisons.

Central Tracing Agency

The Agency was mainly occupied with listing the names of detainees in the prisons visited, exchanging Red Cross messages between detainees and their families and searching for missing persons.

The ICRC also received about sixty requests for family news, which were sent to various parts of the country in co-operation with the Red Lion and Sun Society. About a score of requests for assistance from the families of detainees were also submitted to the National Society.

The ICRC in addition intervened to request that an Israeli national who had been detained and subsequently liberated in October be permitted to leave the country. The person concerned received the necessary visa at the end of October.

ORGANIZATION. — The ICRC maintained at least one delegate in Teheran throughout the year. As the need arose, especially for visits to places of detention, two or three additional delegates were provided.

Yemen Arab Republic

Fighting broke out at the end of February in the frontier zone between the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), resulting in the displacement of many civilians who sought refuge in the central area of North Yemen.

Pursuant to an appeal for assistance from the Red Crescent Society of the Yemen Arab Republic to the International Red Cross, The ICRC sent to that country the head of the Khartoum delegation to examine the needs in consultation with the authorities and to organize an assistance action. Subsequently a member of the staff of the Relief Division was sent to Sana'a to purchase relief supplies and supervise the action. At the end of May, a local employee of the ICRC was left in charge of the final distributions to needy persons.

At the same time, proposals were made by the ICRC to make a visit to the People's Democratic Republic, but without result.

Assistance

About 45,000 persons, including a large proportion of women and children, in the Sana'a orphanage, the camp at Dhamar, and in the regions of Suadia, Marib, Abas and Beida, had the benefit of ICRC assistance. Relief items, including bedding, cooking utensils, a month's supply of

supplementary food, tents and medical material, amounted to 44 tons and cost 299,553 Swiss francs. The British Government and the Finnish Red Cross contributed to the ICRC action with gifts in kind.

The assistance action was carried out in conjunction with the North Yemen Red Crescent and the Catholic Relief Service and had the support of the UNHCR. It was financed by an ad hoc appeal for funds launched on 19 March.

