

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1981)  
  
**Rubrik:** Support for activities throughout the world

### **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:** 24.08.2025

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

## II. HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITIES

### SUPPORT FOR ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

#### Relief

About forty countries benefited from ICRC material and medical assistance in 1981, consisting of some 18,000 tons of material worth 57.5 million Swiss francs. The ICRC action in this field is illustrated by the tables on pages 56, 57 and 58 and may be summarized as follows:

- For **pecially financed actions**, undertaken by the ICRC with the support of governments, National Societies or various organizations, the value of relief supplies of all kinds (about 6,730 tons), delivered to the scene of the action either by the ICRC or directly by the donors, under ICRC supervision, amounted to 24.4 million Swiss francs.
- Thanks to agreements with the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Swiss Confederation, the ICRC supplied **food aid** to 16 countries (nearly 11,244 tons) worth 31.9 million Swiss francs.
- Assistance to **detainees** and to their **families** cost 753,000 Swiss francs, to which should be added 5.9 million Swiss francs for relief supplied under specially financed actions.
- In addition, the ICRC contributed various kinds of assistance, worth 424,200 Swiss francs to eight National Societies to support their activities.

#### Co-operation with National Societies

Throughout the year, the ICRC Relief Division had the benefit of active support from many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which supplied direct assistance either by providing qualified relief personnel or by donations in kind for some specific actions. (See p. 59 for the contributions of National Societies to ICRC medical assistance programmes.)

In the Kampuchea/Thailand action, for example, the ICRC had the help of specialized personnel (relief administrators, storage, construction, purchasing and transport experts) provided by several National Societies. A training course organized at Geneva from 18 to 22 May provided an occasion for detailed discussion of experience gained in the past and for working out more precise guidelines for future co-operation between the ICRC and National Societies, especially in the field of relief.

In addition to their financial contributions to actions carried out by the ICRC, some National Societies gave valuable material assistance by supplying relief goods from their own reserves (clothing, blankets, foodstuffs, logistic equipment) which were delivered promptly to the areas of ICRC intervention.

#### THE LONGEST AIRLIFT

The 13th of October 1981 was the second anniversary of the longest airlift ever organized by the ICRC — to bring relief to Phnom Penh. The following data give some idea of the dimensions of this operation, which still continues, but at a reduced rate:

- Fifteen different aircraft, ranging from the giant DC-10 to the smaller Hawker-Siddeley, were provided to the ICRC by various governments and organizations.
- Between 13 October 1979 and 31 December 1981, 918 flights to Phnom Penh were organized, 774 from Bangkok and 144 from Singapore.
- On these flights the aircraft transported 15,363 tons of material, 277 vehicles and 2,330 passengers, mostly personnel from international organizations.
- The distance flown by these planes totalled more than 2,500,000 kilometers, in nearly 5,000 hours of flight.
- In the peak period, about 250 tons of goods were handled per day — a figure rarely reached even in medium-sized European airports.

It is noteworthy that no serious accident took place and that the whole operation proceeded normally and virtually without interruption. This success was due to the professionalism of the air and ground crews, and to the aid given by the government authorities in the countries concerned.

Beneficiaries	Total Sw.fr.	Swiss Confederation		European Economic Community	
		Commodities	Sw.fr.	Commodities	Sw.fr.
<b>Africa . . . . .</b>	<b>17,243,730</b>		<b>797,310</b>		<b>16,446,420</b>
Angola. . . . .	4,617,670	25.5 t whole-milk powder 4.2 t animal fat	124,760 17,700	950 t maize meal 250 t butteroil 300 t sk.-milk powder	927,440 2,431,350 1,116,420
Ethiopia . . . . .	2,604,100	48 t whole-milk powder 3.8 t animal fat	422,400 10,350	200 t butteroil 50 t sk.-milk powder	1,966,950 204,400
Sudan (conflict in Eritrea) . . . . .	8,668,700			2,054 t wheat flour 750 t sk.-milk powder 400 t butteroil 100 t sugar	1,588,510 2,941,000 3,987,990 151,200
Uganda . . . . .	1,353,260	12 t whole-milk powder 20 t sk.-milk powder	112,220 109,880	100 t butteroil	1,131,160
<b>Latin America . . .</b>	<b>6,869,650</b>		<b>869,130</b>		<b>6,000,520</b>
Argentina . . . . .	781,050	42 t whole-milk powder 25 t processed cheese	393,160 179,670	20 t butteroil	208,220
Colombia . . . . .	158,100			50 t sk.-milk powder	158,100
El Salvador . . . . .	4,321,500			500 t rice 210 t butteroil 401 t sk.-milk powder	640,900 2,375,000 1,305,600
Nicaragua . . . . .	579,000	15 t processed cheese	105,600	40 t rolled oats 60 t sk.-milk powder 20 t butteroil	56,700 191,900 224,800
Paraguay . . . . .	84,200	10 t whole-milk powder	84,200	100 t sk.-milk powder	307,800
Uruguay . . . . .	945,800	15 t processed cheese	106,500	50 t butteroil	531,500
<b>Asia . . . . .</b>	<b>3,368,950</b>		<b>955,000</b>		<b>2,413,950</b>
Philippines. . . . .	2,413,950			250 t rolled oats 500 t sk.-milk powder 500 t rice	334,300 1,480,000 599,650
Viet Nam . . . . .	955,000	1,000 t rice	955,000		
<b>Middle East</b>	<b>4,454,560</b>		<b>892,060</b>		<b>3,562,500</b>
Egypt . . . . .	418,400			100 t sk.-milk powder	418,400
Israel and occupied territories . . . . .	3,144,100			1,648 t wheat 160 t sk.-milk powder 160 t butteroil	1,070,900 571,300 1,501,900
Lebanon. . . . .	281,350	29.5 t whole-milk powder	281,350		
Syria . . . . .	610,710	70.5 t whole-milk powder	610,710		
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>31,936,890</b>	<b>1,320.5 t</b>	<b>3,513,500</b>	<b>9,923 t</b>	<b>28,423,390</b>

\* Amounts include freight.

# **SPECIALLY FINANCED ACTIONS\***

(Relief in kind)

Sw.fr. 24,396,300

	Tons	Sw.fr.
<b>Africa . . . . .</b>		<b>9,843,780</b>
Angola . . . . .	1,001.6	3,021,090
Botswana** . . . . .	—	2,500
Chad . . . . .	1,058.1	2,450,020
Ethiopia . . . . .	901.6	1,342,370
Gambia . . . . .	3.2	21,430
Ghana** . . . . .	—	12,220
Mozambique** . . . . .	—	135,940
Mauritania** . . . . .	—	75,580
Somalia** . . . . .	—	7,090
South Africa . . . . .	117.1	233,000
Sudan (conflict in Eritrea) . . . . .	80	1,002,360
Uganda . . . . .	477.1	1,483,230
Zaire . . . . .	3.4	56,950
 <b>Latin America . . . . .</b>		<b>2,265,520</b>
El Salvador . . . . .	2,336.4	2,000,790
Nicaragua . . . . .	149.9	264,730
 <b>Asia . . . . .</b>		<b>9,354,070</b>
East Timor** . . . . .	—	83,760
Kampuchea . . . . .	195	6,151,920
Pakistan** . . . . .	—	1,366,310
Thailand . . . . .	347.9	1,752,080
 <b>Europe . . . . .</b>		<b>100,640</b>
Poland** . . . . .	—	100,640
 <b>Middle East . . . . .</b>		<b>2,832,290</b>
Iran . . . . .	9.3	322,100
Lebanon . . . . .	48.9	2,510,190
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>6,729.5</b>	<b>24,396,300</b>

\* This table does not include food relief from the EEC and the Swiss Confederation or the figures for aid financed by the regular budget.

\*\* Assistance consisted only of medical relief, not assessed in terms of weight.

# **AID TO DETAINEES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Sw.fr. 753,080

(Financed from regular budget)

<b>Latin America . . . . .</b>	<b>139,760</b>
Argentina . . . . .	116,340
Bolivia . . . . .	2,980
Chile . . . . .	10,870
Colombia . . . . .	7,720
Haiti . . . . .	1,850
 <b>Asia . . . . .</b>	<b>41,620</b>
Indonesia . . . . .	30,280
Philippines . . . . .	11,340
 <b>Middle East . . . . .</b>	<b>571,700</b>
Egypt . . . . .	7,500
Israel and occupied territories . . . . .	494,890
Jordan . . . . .	21,510
Syria . . . . .	27,800
Yemen (Arab Republic of) . . . . .	20,000

# **AID TO NATIONAL SOCIETIES**

Sw.fr. 424,180

(Financed by regular budget)

<b>Africa . . . . .</b>	<b>15,000</b>
Rwanda . . . . .	15,000
 <b>Latin America . . . . .</b>	<b>10,430</b>
Bahamas . . . . .	6,390
Colombia . . . . .	940
Haiti . . . . .	3,100
 <b>Asia . . . . .</b>	<b>388,590</b>
Philippines . . . . .	91,840
Viet Nam . . . . .	296,750
 <b>Middle East . . . . .</b>	<b>10,160</b>
Yemen (Arab Republic of) . . . . .	10,160

---

## TRANSPORT

Costs of transport organized by the ICRC were as follows:

1. Shipments by regular transport services	Kg.	Sw.fr.
— Sea and land. . . . .	390,735	190,869
— Air . . . . .	48,231	298,089
2. Chartered aircraft		
— "Split charter". . . . .	92,703	404,773
— Chartered plane . . . . .	4,670	27,000
— Kampuchean action	721,242	1,269,178
— Angolan action (1011 flying hours) . . . . .		1,189,771
— Timor action (924 flying hours)		1,198,963
3. Customs import charges . . . . .	48,900	35,405
4. Insurance premiums . . . . .		94,999

---

## Medical activities

In medical matters, 1981 was marked by two major developments: organization of the first seminar on emergency medical actions by the International Red Cross and work relating to the International Year of Disabled Persons.

### Seminar on emergency medical actions

As a result of experience gained in co-ordinating medical assistance in large-scale humanitarian actions involving a great number of specialized health workers, as in Lebanon and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe some years ago and more recently in Thailand, for the benefit of victims of the conflict in Kampuchea, the ICRC arrived at the conclusion that a major operation of this nature must be planned and executed in the strictest possible manner to assure maximum efficacy. Although it is clear that the conditions in which medical teams work vary from one situation to another and that there is no universally applicable pattern, it is nevertheless true that a large number of problems are encountered in all such actions and should be dealt with in the same manner, in the light of experience.

These considerations led to the decision to convoke the first seminar on emergency medical actions by the international Red Cross, organized jointly by the ICRC and the

League at Geneva, from 13 to 16 February. About 85 doctors, nurses, nutritionists and health technicians, with experience gained in numerous missions in the field as part of emergency interventions by the International Red Cross, took part in the seminar. They represented 23 National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The seminar provided an occasion for consideration of various ethical and practical aspects of such emergency actions and made it possible to define certain guidelines for the planning and execution of the work. The discussions clearly showed the need for good preparation of both personnel and material in order to provide effective and properly adapted medical assistance. Much of this preparation should be provided by the National Societies taking part in such actions, using training material which should be supplied to them by the ICRC and the League. In substance, this amounts to "memorizing" experience gained in the field by Red Cross medical teams and handing it on to the teams which succeed them. The seminar also stressed the importance of the participation of experienced health professionals at the decision-making level and in directing emergency medical actions.

It is now up to the ICRC and the League to give effect to the conclusions of the Geneva seminar by fulfilling the role of co-ordination assigned to them, while the National Societies should develop further their preparations for emergency medical actions.

### Activities for disabled persons

In close co-operation with the authorities and National Societies concerned, the ICRC for several years has been carrying out a major activity to help war cripples in a number of countries, notably in Africa. Results have been achieved by the application of simple techniques adapted to the material available locally, and by training local personnel to take over from the specialists sent from Geneva. Accordingly, in addition to the rehabilitation centres for war invalids already existing in Ethiopia and Angola, the ICRC, in 1981, set up similar centres in Chad, Mozambique and Pakistan (*see chapters concerning these countries elsewhere in this report*).

It is appropriate in this connection to recall that the Twenty-fourth International Red Cross Conference at Manila adopted a resolution expressing hope that governments would intensify their efforts to support the ICRC, the League and the National Societies in their activities of assistance to disabled persons. It also recommended the creation of a special fund, to be jointly managed by the ICRC and the League, to finance assistance projects for disabled persons.

It may also be noted that the ICRC took part, from 2 to 7 November at Torremolinos, Spain, in a world conference organized by UNESCO in the framework of the International Year of Disabled Persons. The general activities of the ICRC, and in particular its work for the handicapped, were described at the conference.

## Operational activities in 1981

Apart from the activities described above, the ICRC Medical Division continued its operational tasks in the field of protection (participation in visits to prisoners of war, civilian internees and "political" detainees) and in that of assistance during or after armed conflicts (care of the wounded and sick, supplying of medical relief).

The ICRC chief medical officer and other members of the division carried out several missions to assess the medical aspects of actions in Africa (Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan), Latin America (El Salvador), Asia (Kampuchea, Thailand, Pakistan) and Europe (Northern Ireland, Poland).

The total number of medical and paramedical personnel sent into the field in 1981 (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, prosthetists, laboratory technicians, pharmacists, nutritionists, hygienists) amounted to 338, considerably fewer than the year before (1,112), due largely to changes in the medical setups in Kampuchea and Thailand. Of the total, 187 came from the National Red Cross Societies of twenty countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.).

During the year, the total value of medicaments and medical material supplied by the ICRC amounted to 13 million Swiss francs.

## Activities for detainees

The main ICRC protective function is visiting places of detention holding prisoners of war, civilian internees or persons arrested because of internal disturbances or tension.

While visits to prisoners of war and civilian internees are made under the terms of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, visits to persons held because of internal disturbances or tension – sometimes qualified as political detainees – are outside the scope of these Conventions and their Protocols. They are legally based on the Statutes of the International Red Cross, which define the ICRC as an institution whose activities are exercised also in times of internal disturbances, and which authorize it to take any humanitarian action falling within its competence as a specifically neutral and independent intermediary. These Statutes were approved by an International Red Cross Conference, which brings together not only the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the League and the ICRC, but also the governments parties to the Geneva Conventions. This means that the ICRC is able to offer its services to States in such circumstances without the risk of being accused of going beyond its competence or interfering in matters concerning national sovereignty. The States, however, are under no obligation to accept the ICRC's services. It is therefore on the basis of a relationship of trust that the ICRC is autho-

rized to act. At times, it is by invitation of the government concerned that the ICRC undertakes protective duties in a country.

The internal disturbances or tensions in which the ICRC may act can be of various kinds. For example, there may be serious political, religious, racial or social tension; the situation may be the result of the suspension by official decree of essential guarantees, or it may be caused by recourse to emergency judicial measures or procedures under which the rights and liberties guaranteed by the national constitution or by a fundamental law are not, or are no longer, respected.

In every such situation, however, there is a common feature: the persons who are the victims of particularly violent or tense situations need the protection and assistance of a neutral institution, and this need the ICRC meets.

### Conditions and procedure for visits

The ICRC visits places of detention provided that its delegates are allowed:

- to see all detainees and talk to them freely without witnesses;
- to have access to all places of detention, and to repeat visits;
- to demand the list of persons to be visited, or to compile such a list during the visit;
- to distribute, where there is need, material assistance to detainees and to their families in distress.

Periodical and thorough visits are carried out by ICRC delegates, all of them of Swiss nationality, and usually one of them is a doctor. Before and after the visits, discussions are held with those in charge of the detention centres, and, later, confidential reports are sent to the detaining authorities, and to no-one else. The reports describe objectively and in detail the conditions of detention, and may contain suggestions for improvements. The reports are not for publication. The ICRC limits itself to publishing the number and names of the places visited, the number of persons seen and the dates of visits; it indicates whether or not the delegates were able to talk to detainees without witnesses. It makes no comment on the motives for detention and does not publicly discuss the material or psychological conditions found. If any government publishes part of an ICRC report, or quotes it inaccurately, the Committee then reserves the right to publish the report concerned in its entirety.

### Statistics for 1981

Since 28 April 1919, the date of the first visit to political detainees, in Hungary, this field of activity of the ICRC has constantly grown larger, until it is now one of the major functions of the institution. Its importance has augmented in recent years owing to the change in the nature of conflicts in the world, so that the ICRC now finds itself increasingly engaged where there are internal disturbances and tensions.



**VISITS BY THE ICRC IN 1981 TO  
PRISONERS OF WAR, CIVILIAN INTERNEES  
AND "POLITICAL" DETAINEES**

Country	Number of places of detention	Number of detainees
<b>Africa</b>		
Angola	1	1
Ethiopia	1	60
Namibia/South-West Africa	7	215
South Africa	8	506
Tanzania	1	~ 20
Uganda	18	5,730
Zaire	26	~ 4,620
<b>Latin America</b>		
Argentina	18	1,700
Bolivia	5	~ 20
Chile	11	106
Colombia	5	215
El Salvador	207	1,540
Haiti	3	52
Nicaragua	6	3,650
Paraguay	3	13
<b>Asia</b>		
Indonesia	26	347
Malaysia	2	390
Philippines	35	842
<b>Europe</b>		
Northern Ireland	5	2,184
Spain	19	559
<b>Middle East</b>		
Iran	38	~ 10,000*
Iraq	3	~ 2,500
Israel and the occupied territories	16	~ 4,360
Jordan	17	~ 3,000
Yemen Arab Republic	6	~ 1,100
Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of	2	~ 400
<b>TOTAL: 26</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>~ 44,000</b>

\* including about 7,000 prisoners of war.

During 1981, ICRC delegates made approximately 5,000 visits\* in 489 places of detention located in 26 countries. They saw some 44,000 persons deprived of their freedom, including almost 9,700 prisoners of war in 7 countries.

The programmes of material assistance to detainees and their families were estimated at 753,080 Swiss francs (see Table, p. 57), with a further 5.9 million Swiss francs spent on relief supplied to this category of victims under actions with special financing.

## Telecommunications

The number of radio messages exchanged between ICRC headquarters and delegations in the field rose to 8,620 in 1981, as against 7,454 in 1980. In contrast, radio traffic between delegations fell in comparison with the previous year, totalling 17,587 messages (1980: 20,544). This drop is mainly explained by the reduction in ICRC activity along the Khmer-Thailand border.

Taking telex messages into account, ICRC Telecommunication Service technicians (staff strength: 11 at headquarters and 16 in the field) dealt with 53,259 messages transmitted or received, compared with 62,014 messages in 1980.

Ten new stations, necessitated by the development of relief work, were opened in 1981: seven in Angola – Luanda, Huambo and Bailundo (March), Kuito (April), Katchiungo (July), Lubango and Lobito (September); two in Uganda in Arua (January) and Moyo (April); and one in Chad – N'Djamena (March) – which was closed down seven months later with the cessation of ICRC action in that country.

Three other stations were closed down: Kousseri (Cameroon) in March; Lusaka (Zambia) in May; and Gaborone (Botswana) in August. The Caracas (Venezuela) station, which had been on standby since 1977, was dismantled and the material returned to Geneva.

On 31 December, the ICRC radiocommunication network was as shown on the opposite page:

\* This figure includes visits for the purpose of recording names, interim visits, medical visits, special visits, and those which were not completed for various reasons.

