

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1988)

Rubrik: Field operations

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>

Field operations

With an average of 3,500 staff working in 44 delegations (about 450 delegates, nearly 100 posts occupied by staff seconded by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and some 3,000 locally recruited employees), in 1988 the ICRC was active in almost 90 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East — taking into account the countries covered from its various regional delegations — providing protection and assistance for the victims of armed conflict and internal disturbances and tension.

Activities for people deprived of their freedom

In 1988 ICRC delegates visited prisoners of war and so-called “security detainees” in 830 places of detention in 36 countries (*for details, see the countries/conflicts concerned later in this chapter*). The purpose of these visits is purely humanitarian; ICRC delegates inspect the material and psychological conditions of detention and the treatment accorded to prisoners, provide detainees with relief if required (medicines, clothing, toilet articles) and, if necessary, ask the authorities to take steps to improve the detainees’ treatment and living conditions.

The ICRC visits places of detention providing its delegates are allowed:

- ☐ to see all the detainees and talk freely to them without witnesses;
- ☐ to have access to all premises used for detention;
- ☐ to repeat their visits.

In addition, the ICRC generally asks for a list of the persons to be visited or for permission to draw up such a list during the visit and to distribute material assistance to needy detainees and their families.

Before and after these visits, discussions at various levels are held with the people in charge of the detention centres. Confidential reports are then drawn up. In the case of internal disturbances or tension, these reports are sent only to the detaining authorities, while in the case of international armed conflict they are sent both to the Detaining Power and to the Power of Origin of the prisoners of war or civilian internees. These confidential reports are not intended for publication. The ICRC, for its part, confines

itself to publishing the number and names of the places visited, the dates of the visits and the number of people seen. It also mentions the fact that its delegates were able to talk to the prisoners without witnesses. It does not express an opinion on the grounds for detention and does not publicly comment on the material or psychological conditions it finds. If a government should publish incomplete or inaccurate versions of ICRC reports, the ICRC reserves the right to publish and circulate them in full.

Central Tracing Agency

The Central Tracing Agency (CTA) of the ICRC continued to carry out its tasks arising both from its treaty obligations towards civilian and military victims of armed conflicts and from the exercise by the ICRC of its right to take the humanitarian initiative.

It will be recalled that the CTA and its delegates in the field are mainly concerned with the following tasks:

- ☐ obtaining, registering, collating and, when necessary, forwarding information about people helped by the ICRC, such as prisoners of war, civilian internees, detainees, displaced persons and refugees;
- ☐ forwarding family messages when there are no normal means of communication or they have been interrupted by the conflict;
- ☐ tracing persons reported missing or whose relatives are without news;
- ☐ arranging for family reunifications, transfer (of particularly vulnerable groups, for example) to safe places, and repatriations;
- ☐ issuing, on request, written attestations for former detainees and prisoners of war certifying that they were held, or were sick, wounded or hospitalized while in captivity; drawing up death certificates so that family entitlements to pensions or compensation can be claimed;
- ☐ issuing ICRC travel documents on the basis of statements made by applicants who, owing to the upheavals caused by conflicts, have no identity papers or passports. Such documents are valid for one journey only.

All these activities undertaken in Geneva and in the field are carried out in co-operation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a large number of which have their own tracing services.

Statistics for the overall activities of the CTA in 1988, both at Geneva headquarters and in the field, are as follows:

- 1,484,929 Red Cross messages were exchanged, 1,415,920 of them in relation to the conflict between Iraq and Iran;
- 78,239 requests for tracing missing persons were processed;
- 9,773 capture cards for prisoners of war or civilian internees were received and 13,076 registration cards for security detainees were drawn up;
- 12,319 certificates of captivity, sickness, death, etc. were issued;
- 652 family reunifications and 4,865 repatriations were organized;
- 2,283 travel documents were provided.

The CTA continued to handle cases relating to past conflicts, in particular the Second World War.

Medical and material relief

In 1988 the ICRC purchased and sent directly to the scene of action 18,680 tonnes of relief supplies for a value of 21 million Swiss francs. In addition, 58,644 tonnes (worth 44 million Swiss francs) were made available by donor governments. A total of 77,291 tonnes of relief (not counting medical supplies), worth 65 million Swiss francs, was thus dispatched by the ICRC to 39 countries in 1988. More than 44,000 tonnes, worth 44 million Swiss francs, were actually distributed to beneficiaries during the year. These figures do not include the 34,971 tonnes, worth 24 million Swiss francs, that were transferred to the joint League/Ethiopian Red Cross programme and to several other humanitarian organizations following the suspension of ICRC operations in Ethiopia.

Medical assistance came to 11.5 million Swiss francs. Throughout the year, moreover, the ICRC sent a total of 274 medical and paramedical personnel (doctors, surgeons, male and female nurses, physiotherapists, prosthetists, nutritionists, public health specialists and medical administrators) to take part in activities in various parts of

the world. Of these, 132 were seconded to the ICRC by the National Red Cross Societies of 19 countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States).

Several of these National Societies, and those of Ireland, Portugal and Spain, also provided the ICRC with technical staff (relief administrators, warehouse and transport managers, mechanics, etc.) who took part in field relief operations.

The total value of the medical and other supplies dispatched by the ICRC in 1987 was distributed geographically as follows:

	<i>(Swiss francs)</i>	
Africa	30,214,914	54.88%
Latin America	6,799,133	12.35%
Asia	7,231,873	13.13%
Middle East and North Africa	10,813,833	19.64%
TOTAL	55,059,753	100%

(See pages 41, 57, 76, 88 for detailed tables)

Medical and other assistance for detainees and their families, included in the above figures, cost 5,807,673 Swiss francs and amounted to more than 2,250 tonnes of relief supplies.

It should be remembered that the ICRC undertakes material and medical aid programmes only in cases of armed conflict and internal disturbances and tension, and only providing it can:

- carry out on-the-spot checks on the urgency of the victims' needs;
- make local surveys to identify the categories and numbers of people requiring assistance;
- organize and supervise relief distributions.

The figures quoted above represent only part of the cost of aid programmes as they appear in the budgets and financial reports for each operation. Such operations also involve very substantial expenditure on personnel, equipment, vehicles, transport, storage, etc. The total cost appears in the tables showing the breakdown of expenditure in 1988 according to type of activity (*pink pages, Table III*).

AFRICA

1. South Africa
2. Angola
3. Burundi
4. Ethiopia
5. Kenya
Regional delegation covering Kenya, Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tanzania.
6. Mozambique
7. Namibia/South West Africa
8. Nigeria
Regional delegation covering Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
9. Uganda
10. Rwanda
11. Somalia
12. Sudan
13. Chad
14. Togo
Regional delegation covering Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger and Senegal.
15. Zaire
Regional delegation covering Zaire, Burundi, the Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.
16. Zimbabwe
Regional delegation covering Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia.

LATIN AMERICA

17. Argentina
Regional delegation covering Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.
18. Chile
19. Colombia
Regional delegation covering Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana and Venezuela.
20. Costa Rica
Regional delegation covering Costa Rica, Belize, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic and the other countries of the Caribbean.
21. Guatemala
22. Honduras
23. Nicaragua
24. Peru
25. El Salvador

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

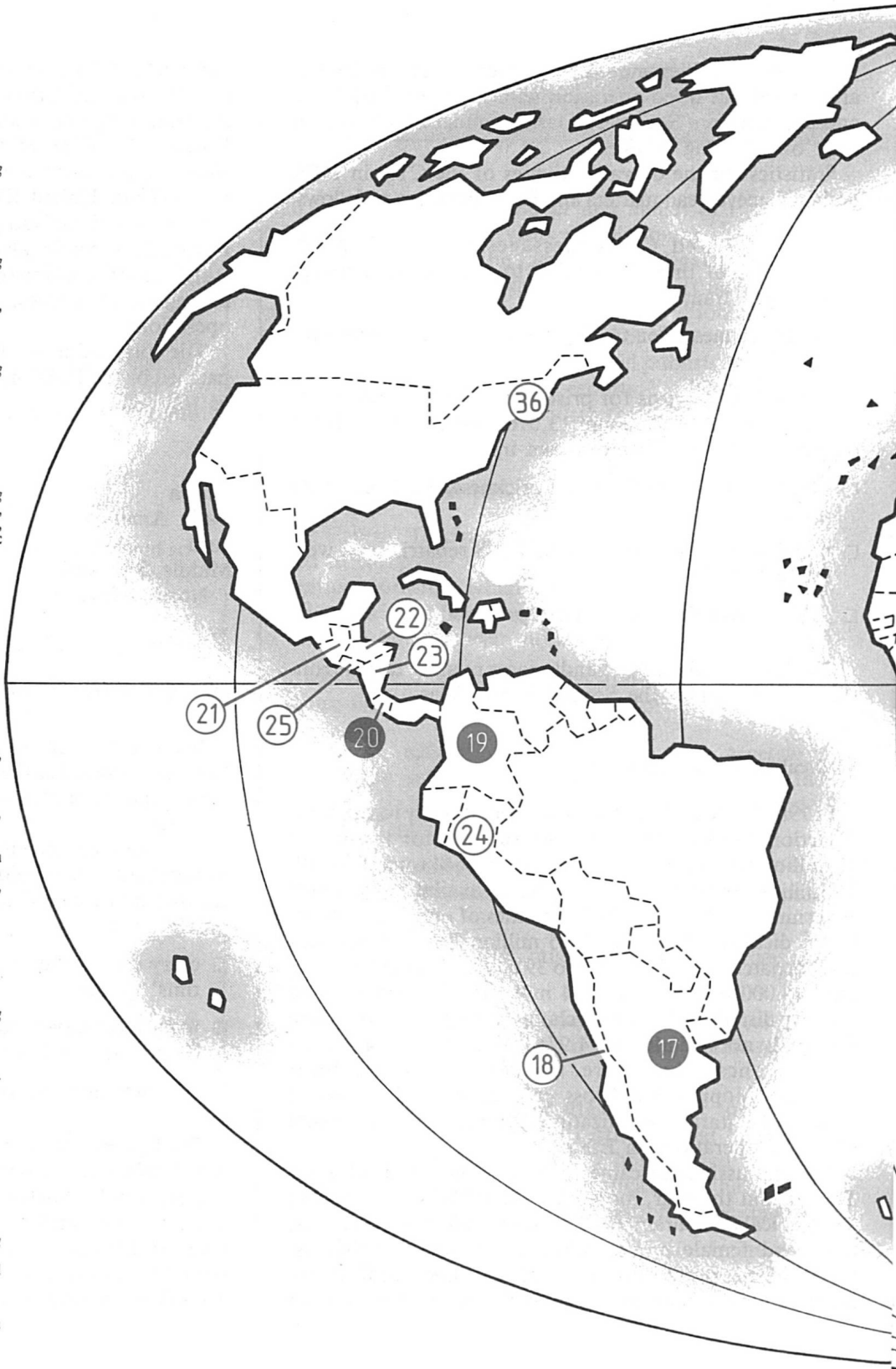
26. Afghanistan
27. Burma
28. Hong Kong
Regional delegation covering Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Taiwan.
29. India
Regional delegation covering India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
30. Indonesia
Regional delegation covering Indonesia/East Timor, Australia, Brunei,
- the Cook Islands, Fiji, the French Pacific territories, Kiribati, Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, (Federated States of) Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, United States Pacific territories, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
31. Kampuchea
32. Pakistan
33. Philippines
34. Thailand
35. Viet Nam
Regional delegation covering Viet Nam and Laos.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

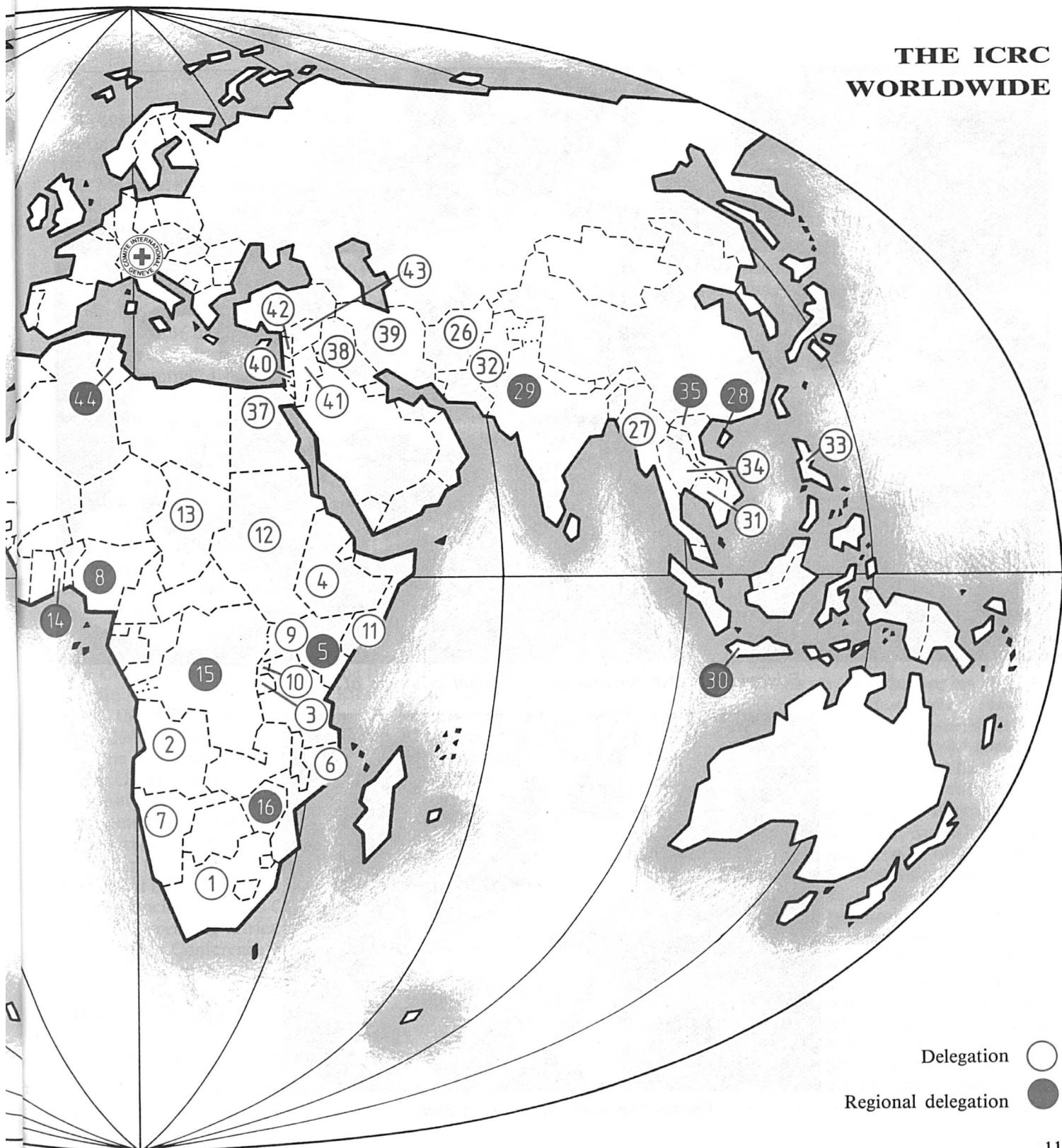
36. United States

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

37. Egypt
 38. Iraq
 39. Iran
 40. Israel and the occupied territories
 41. Jordan
 42. Lebanon
 43. Syria
 44. Tunisia
Regional delegation covering Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and the conflict in the Western Sahara.
- (The delegation for the Arabian Peninsula is based in Geneva.)



THE ICRC WORLDWIDE



Delegation ○
Regional delegation ●