

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1991)  
  
**Rubrik:** Middle East and North Africa

### **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:** 06.01.2026

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

## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

*The conflict that broke out in the Middle East with the occupation of Kuwait by the Iraqi armed forces on 2 August 1990 reached its peak during the six weeks of fighting between Iraq and the countries of the Coalition, beginning on 17 January 1991. This armed conflict had a profound effect not only on the whole of the Middle East and North Africa, but also on the entire world. For the ICRC and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as a whole, it constituted one of the greatest challenges ever faced: rarely has it been necessary to set up an operation of this scale, under conditions as difficult and in such a short time. The ICRC — and through its work, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in its entirety — rose to the challenge: a vast protection and assistance operation was mounted for the civilian and military victims of hostilities in Iraq, then in Kuwait, and also in Iran, where a flood of Iraqi refugees had gone to seek shelter. At the height of this operation, over 350 expatriates were working*

*in the Persian Gulf region with the support, in kind and in services, of over 40 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.*

*Though the conflict in the Gulf region monopolized the efforts of the Movement, it could not erase the persistent problems posed by several other conflicts in the region. Talks that began in Madrid in October between the protagonists of the Arab-Israeli conflict did, however, make it seem possible to hope that a process leading to peace and reconciliation among the Israelis, the Palestinians and their Arab neighbours could be set in motion in the not too distant future.*

*The ICRC has been present in the occupied territories for nearly 25 years. Its delegates continued to work and to maintain a dialogue with the various protagonists, admittedly a difficult task, in order to solve the many serious problems in the area. The ICRC also stood ready, as a neutral and independent humanitarian institution, to visit and to repatriate the prisoners of war on both sides of the conflict in the Sahara.*

### 8 delegations:

Saudi Arabia  
Egypt  
Iraq  
Iran  
Israel/occupied territories  
Jordan  
Lebanon  
Syria

### 2 regional delegations:

Kuwait City  
Tunis

### Staff\*:

ICRC expatriates: 146  
National Societies: 502  
Local employees: 401

### Total expenditure:

212,058,200 Swiss francs

## CONFLICT IN THE GULF

The armed conflict triggered off on 2 August 1990 when the Iraqi armed forces invaded Kuwait, and sanctioned by a dozen United Nations Security Council resolutions, led to a phase of active hostilities between Iraq and the armed forces of a coalition comprising some 30 countries, beginning on 17 January 1991. In addition to the human suffering it engendered for hundreds of thousands of people, in terms of the military means engaged and the political stakes involved this conflict was one of the most important confrontations since the Second World War.

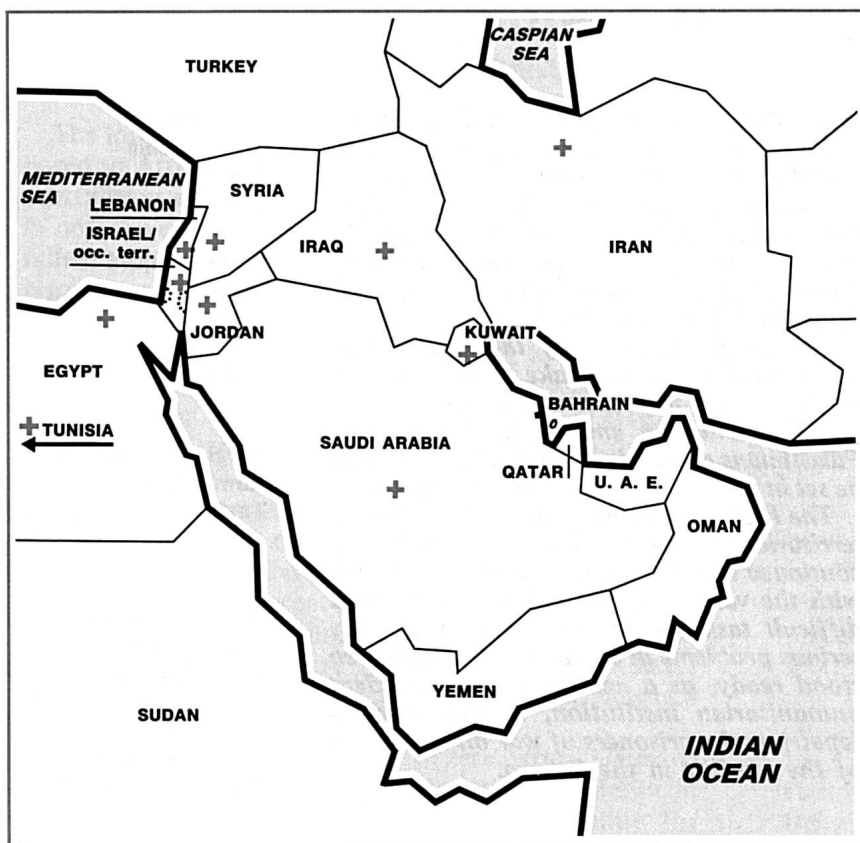
The ICRC, with the help of the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, carried out a large-scale coordinated operation on behalf of the victims of this conflict, while continually renewing its

efforts to heighten awareness among the belligerents — and also in the international community and in the media — of the obligation to comply with international humanitarian law.

Shortly after the international armed conflict ended, two internal armed conflicts broke out in Iraq in March, first in the south and then in the north of the country. These conflicts had dramatic consequences for the local inhabitants. The ICRC acted on behalf of the victims, for the most part civilians and prisoners of war, both in the south and in the north: these operations were conducted under difficult conditions and, in the case of Kurdistan, in a media-hyped atmosphere.

During the occupation of Kuwait, from August 1990 to February 1991, the ICRC was unable to carry out its mandate under the Conventions: the Iraqi government refused to discuss the matter, despite repeated

\* Average numbers calculated on an annual basis



representations at the highest level. Once Kuwait had been liberated, however, the ICRC quickly received all facilities from the authorities of this country to visit detainees and protect Iraqi nationals and persons without diplomatic protection (Palestinians, Jordanians, Yemenites, Sudanese and stateless persons), as well as to search for people reported missing and re-establish family ties.

At the end of 1991, the ICRC was still active in Saudi Arabia, in Iraq and in Kuwait, with work stemming from the conflicts that had broken out during the year.

\*  
\* \*

#### Approaches made in relation to the conflict

As early as 2 August 1990, when Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, the ICRC drew at-

tention to the applicability of the Geneva Conventions of 1959, reminding the two countries — both of which are party to them — of their obligations in times of armed conflict and offering its services to carry out its mandate on behalf of the victims.

Between August and December 1990, the United Nations Security Council adopted a series of resolutions aimed at securing the withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait, in particular by imposing an economic embargo on Iraq. Some of these resolutions referred directly to the application of the Geneva Conventions.

The ICRC had been present in Baghdad since 1980, in connection with the Iran-Iraq conflict. From 2 August 1990 and throughout the occupation of Kuwait it was nevertheless unable, as mentioned above and despite its repeated representations to Iraq and the entire community of States, to carry out its mandate under the Conventions, owing to the refusal of the Iraqi authorities. It thus had no possibility of checking on the situation of the Kuwaiti and foreign prisoners, or that of the civilian population in Kuwait.

On 29 November 1990, United Nations Security Council resolution 678 ordered the Iraqi government to withdraw its troops from Kuwait by 15 January 1991 and authorized the use of force after this date if Iraq did not comply.

Faced with this contingency, the ICRC intensified its diplomatic approaches and stepped up preparations for its humanitarian operation. On 14 December it addressed a memorandum, recalling the basic provisions of international humanitarian law applicable in cases of armed conflict, to all the States party to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. At the same time it reiterated its offers of service and carried out a series of high-level missions to the capitals of the principle countries concerned: Baghdad, London, Washington, Paris, Riyadh, Tehran and Ankara.

During this time, approaches were also being made to the armed forces of the Coalition — in particular in Washington, London and Paris — to alert their governments to the importance of creating National Information

Bureaux. These National Bureaux would be responsible for transmitting to the Central Tracing Agency information concerning prisoners of war (notification of capture, including complete identification and a number personally assigned to each POW), for informing the prisoners of their rights — the right to fill in a capture card, for example — and for tasks related to the exchange of family messages. The ICRC had accumulated eight years of experience in this respect during the Iran-Iraq conflict, and one of its objectives was to make sure a unified system was adopted for the transcription of Arabic names.

Meanwhile, the ICRC in Geneva was making preparations for operations on a large scale. Between mid-December 1990 and 16 January 1991, the ICRC increased its staff in the countries of the region where it already had a delegation (Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel and the occupied territories, Jordan, Syria) and designated some 50 other members of staff for imminent departure. Furthermore, stocks of emergency supplies were constituted and two aircraft made ready to take off for Bahrain. The regional delegate visited the emirate on 14 January to negotiate an agreement allowing the ICRC to use Bahrain as a logistical base and to set up a radio communications system there in case the ICRC was able to mount an operation in Kuwait. This agreement was signed on the same day.

Finally, contact was taken up with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as with the National Societies themselves, to prepare a plan of action for the entire Movement; this plan of action was to be placed under the direction of the ICRC. An agreement to this effect was signed on 16 January in Geneva between the Federation and the ICRC. National Societies prepared to join the operation and responded quickly and massively to the ICRC's appeal: within a few days, over 600 staff — mostly medical personnel — hundreds of tonnes of relief supplies, field hospitals and logistical resources were provided for the coordinated operation in the Gulf.

### Armed conflict between Iraq and the Coalition

On 17 January 1991, when the air forces of the Coalition countries first flew into Iraq and Kuwait, the ICRC immediately sent a *note verbale* to representatives in Geneva and in New York of all the parties to the conflict, reminding them of their obligations as signatories of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of victims of war. Insisting that all necessary precautions be taken to spare civilians by those conducting the hostilities, the ICRC also reminded them of the basic provisions of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict:

- ☐ that wounded, sick or shipwrecked combatants and those placed *hors de combat* must be treated humanely;
- ☐ that medical personnel and establishments must be respected at all times;
- ☐ that the choice of means of combat is not unlimited;
- ☐ that the use of certain means of combat is prohibited by humanitarian law (arms of mass destruction, chemical and bacteriological weapons);
- ☐ that recourse to the use of atomic weapons is incompatible with this law;
- ☐ that attacks causing widespread, long-term and serious damage to the natural environment and attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population are prohibited by international humanitarian law.

The ICRC also confirmed that it stood ready to carry out the tasks assigned to it by the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and, as a neutral and independent intermediary, to further any other action taken on behalf of military or civilian victims. Finally, it appealed to the parties to the conflict to seek ways of resolving the conflict through dialogue and not through the use of force.

That same day, an emergency appeal for 141 million Swiss francs was launched in Geneva to finance the combined operation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and an aircraft carrying six



ICRC delegates, one delegate from the Federation and 3.3 tonnes of emergency relief supplies left Geneva for Bahrain, where the logistical base had been opened on 14 January.

From then on the ICRC delegation in Baghdad, with its four delegates, did its utmost to maintain contact with the authorities and the Red Crescent and to bring emergency assistance to the population and to the hospitals in the city, under extremely difficult conditions.

The Coalition forces began an intensive bombardment of Iraq and Kuwait, while Iraq launched Scud missiles on urban centres in Saudi Arabia and Israel. The fear caused by these missiles was heightened by the possibility that they might be carrying chemical warheads (see also *Israel and occupied territories* below).

The ICRC quickly received all facilities from the Saudi authorities to carry out its mandate under the Conventions with regard to the protection of prisoners of war. The POWs captured by the Coalition forces were gathered in transit camps, then transferred to camps run by only one detaining power: Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the powers which had captured the prisoners remained responsible for them, in accordance with Article 12 of the Third Geneva Convention.

Visits to POWs in Saudi Arabia began on 24 January. ICRC delegates also went to France, Great Britain and Turkey to visit Iraqi nationals interned for security reasons and protected by the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The Iraqi government was notified of the identity of 30 prisoners of war and 61 civilians interned in the United Kingdom.

In Iraq, it was only on 3 March (after the cease-fire) that the ICRC was able to register and visit the Coalition prisoners of war in Iraqi hands, along with the Kuwaiti military and civilians captured from 2 August 1990 on and deported to the Baghdad area. Until then the ICRC delegates in Baghdad had not been notified of the capture of these prisoners, nor had they been allowed to visit them to register their names or to forward news about them to their families.

The ICRC furthermore addressed a reminder to the Iraqi authorities that under Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention, prisoners of war must be protected against public curiosity; several Coalition POWs had in fact been filmed during their captivity and thus shown on television networks throughout the world.

In Geneva, the ICRC built up a special unit for the transcription and computerized administration of capture cards for the prisoners of war. Some sixty Arabic-language translators were recruited to set up the files containing the POWs' personal data and tracing requests for persons reported missing by their families, by National Societies or by the National Information Bureaux.

The ICRC Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa went to Baghdad on 12 and 16 February to hold discussions with representatives of the government and the Iraqi Red Crescent. An agreement was subsequently signed between the ICRC and the National Society on a joint assistance operation focusing mainly on medical aid and activities to trace missing people and reunite families.

During this time, responding to the ICRC's appeal, the National Societies of several different countries were sending aircraft laden with relief supplies to Bahrain, Iran, Jordan and Syria, while the ICRC delegations in Amman and Tehran were setting up logistical structures to take delivery of these consignments and send them on to Iraq. The ICRC was hardly ever able to use the main road between Amman and Baghdad before the end of hostilities, but it was possible to transport goods along the road linking Tehran to the Iraqi capital as from 31 January. That same day, the first convoy reached Baghdad with 19 tonnes of medical supplies and other vital necessities, accompanied by four delegates. This aid was distributed with the help of the Iraqi Red Crescent in the hospitals and orphanages of the capital. The delegates' surveys there soon showed that top priority had to be given to maintaining a supply of drinking water, as the power stations had been bombarded and there was not enough fuel to keep the water pumps going. It was thus

## MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT: ICRC APPEALS TO BELLIGERENTS

The conflict now raging in the Middle East will inevitably bring widespread destruction, perhaps on a scale unprecedented in this part of the world. Millions of civilians have been caught up in the violence, without shelter or protection against occupation and bombing. Growing numbers of combatants are falling into enemy hands. Hundreds of thousands of ground troops — most of them young men — are preparing to meet in a deadly confrontation. The determination of the parties in conflict and the build-up of awesome means of destruction are a presage of irreversible devastation. When the veil of censorship is lifted, the full horror of the suffering inflicted on the peoples of the region and on combatants and their families will be revealed for all to see.

One of the most disquieting aspects of this conflict is the possibility that the law of war, which is the expression of the most basic and universal principles of humanity and of the dictates of public conscience, might be swept

aside by the political, military or propaganda demands of the moment.

The right to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. Weapons having indiscriminate effects and those likely to cause disproportionate suffering and damage to the environment are prohibited. The wounded, whether civilian or military, and prisoners must receive special consideration and protection in compliance with specific rules which the entire international community has undertaken to respect.

The International Committee of the Red Cross therefore solemnly appeals today to all belligerents, in the name of all civilian and military victims, to have due regard for humanitarian considerations. To show respect for the victims and to treat them humanely, in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, is to recognize a heritage common to all mankind and thus pave the way for reconciliation. It is also the last chance of averting a tragedy even greater than the use of force.

imperative to restore the distribution network that had produced over 1.5 million cubic metres of drinking water per day in Baghdad before the war began, and served a population of four million inhabitants (see *Water purification programme*).

Given the sheer scale of the conflict and faced both with serious violations of international humanitarian law in the conduct of hostilities — Iraq had threatened to use chemical weapons if its territory was invaded and Scud missiles were being launched on urban centres in Israel and in Saudi Arabia — and with the perilous situation of the civilian population in Iraq, the ICRC made a solemn appeal to all belligerents on 1 February. The text of this appeal is given above. In it, the ICRC called upon all parties to respect not only the provisions of international humanitarian law in the choice of weapons, but also the basic principles of humanity, in order to provide protection for civilian and military victims.

At the same time, ICRC representatives were carrying out numerous missions to the countries involved in the conflict. The President of the ICRC, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, visited London, Paris and Amman to meet

the highest authorities of the respective countries and discuss the course taken by the hostilities, the resultant problems and those confronting the humanitarian operation. In the capital of the United Kingdom, Mr. Sommaruga met the Prime Minister, Mr. John Major; in Paris, he was received, together with the President of the National Society, by President François Mitterand. In the Jordanian capital, he met HRH Crown Prince Hassan, who informed him that in accordance with Articles 109-117 of the Third Geneva Convention Jordan was ready, as a nonbelligerent power, to receive without distinction the wounded from all parties to the conflict for treatment on its territory.

During the entire month of February, the Coalition forces continued their intensive bombardment of Iraq and Kuwait, resulting in the destruction of military and strategic targets such as power stations, telecommunications systems, roads and bridges, factories, and so on. The civilian population bore the brunt: the dangers of bombardment were compounded by the risks of a major health disaster, the lack of medicine and, above all, a severe shortage of drinking water.

Responding to this and the unknown

situation of civilians in Kuwait, the ICRC reported its concern through the media and announced that it would send relief supplies and delegates to several cities in Iraq. On 18 February, it once again reminded the belligerents of their obligations under the Conventions in a *note verbale* focusing on the protection of civilians and their property (provisions concerning the free passage of goods essential for the survival of the population, and the evacuation and treatment of non-combatants) and proposing the establishment of hospital and safety zones or neutralized zones.

During this same period, the Iraqi troops in Kuwait set fire to the oil wells before withdrawing from the country, thus causing massive pollution extending into the waters of the Persian Gulf.

On 24 February, the Coalition forces launched their ground offensive and advanced on Kuwait. Within four days, these troops had liberated Kuwait, captured over 85,000 Iraqi soldiers and occupied a part of Iraqi territory. The ICRC reiterated its appeal to the belligerents, insisting that the provisions of the Geneva Conventions be respected, in particular those of the Fourth Geneva Convention relating to the occupation of territories and the protection of civilians. Two days later, on 26 February, it issued a general reminder through the media that although its delegates were able to carry out their mandate on behalf of prisoners of war interned by the Coalition, the ICRC had still not been granted access to prisoners of war in Iraqi hands, despite numerous approaches made to the authorities in Baghdad.

On 27 February, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Mr. Tariq Aziz, addressed a letter to the President of the United Nations Security Council stating that Iraq accepted the resolutions adopted by the Council and its conditions for the proclamation of a cease-fire. Iraq also announced its willingness to release and repatriate all prisoners of war under the auspices of the ICRC. The Iraqi government confirmed this statement in a formal communication addressed to the head of the ICRC delegation in Baghdad on 3 March.

At the beginning of March the President of the ICRC, accompanied by the Director of Operations and the head of the ICRC's delegation in New York, was received by President George Bush at the White House in Washington. The President of the American Red Cross also attended this meeting. During his visit to the United States, President Sommaruga also met UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar and his staff at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

On 1 March, the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution (No. 686), ordering Iraq to take all measures required to secure a definitive cessation of hostilities and demanding implementation of the twelve resolutions previously adopted concerning Kuwait. The authorities in Baghdad were also enjoined to rescind the measures taken against Kuwait, return all property seized and immediately release, under the auspices of the ICRC, all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the mortal remains of any deceased persons. The cease-fire was officially declared on 2 April with resolution 687.

#### **Repatriation of prisoners of war**

The ICRC immediately began to register POWs and to conduct interviews without witnesses to ascertain the willingness of each prisoner to be repatriated. Delegates in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq also worked to organize the repatriation of these tens of thousands of men.

On 3 March the American Chiefs of Staff (representing the Coalition forces) met their Iraqi counterparts in Safwan, on the border between Iraq and Kuwait, to discuss details of the cease-fire. They agreed to repatriate the prisoners of war without delay and mandated the ICRC to carry out the repatriation.

The operation began the next day, 4 March, with the release of ten Coalition POWs (six Americans, three British and one Italian), who were transferred by road to Jordan under the auspices of the ICRC and handed over in Amman to representatives of their respective country. On 5 March, Iraq released 35 other POWs from the Coalition forces, handing them over to the ICRC in Baghdad. These prisoners boarded an ICRC aircraft the next

day for Riyadh, while 294 Iraqi POWs were being transported, also by ICRC aircraft, to Baghdad. The same day, 1,181 Kuwaitis released by Iraq crossed the border at Safwan and returned to their country under the protection of the ICRC. All of those repatriated had been seen individually by ICRC delegates before their return.

After carrying out these first repatriations, the ICRC invited representatives from Iraq and from the Coalition forces (France, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States) to Riyadh to talk over procedures for the repatriation of all other prisoners of war and civilians. During the first meeting, on 7 March, the ICRC expressed its willingness to supervise this extensive operation provided that all the parties involved undertook to abide by the conditions laid down by the institution in a memorandum. Among other things, the memorandum stipulated that:

- no prisoner of war or civilian internee may be returned to his country of origin against his will,
- prisoners of war and civilian internees must be able to decide, free of outside pressure in any form, whether or not they wish to be repatriated, and
- all those who decide not to return to their country of origin, and members of their families, must be protected from any form of punishment or reprisal.

In addition, the ICRC made it a condition that it must be granted all the facilities necessary for it to gather information, both during and after the release and repatriation of the prisoners of war and civilian internees, to establish the whereabouts of missing persons. The memorandum expressly specified that one such facility was the right to maintain direct contact with all possible sources of information, including repatriated prisoners of war or civilian internees.

These conditions were accepted. Following this first meeting, the ICRC therefore took charge, in close cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, of the practical organization of repatriations overland from the Saudi border to Baghdad (over 100 buses were required to transport the POWs). Prisoners coming in the

opposite direction were transported by the Coalition armed forces. These operations enabled Kuwaiti military personnel and civilians who had been deported to internment camps in Iran and Iraqi prisoners of war captured by the Coalition forces to return to their home countries. All these repatriations were organized by the delegation in Riyadh and passed through the border post of Ar'ar, on Saudi soil. The ICRC also visited Iraqi civilians interned in the camps at Artawieh and Rafha (see below).

After the end of hostilities, the delegation in Riyadh maintained regular contact with the Office of External Relations of the Kuwaiti "National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs" established in the Saudi capital. They worked in close cooperation in matters related to repatriations and the search for missing persons.

On 8 March the ICRC transferred from Baghdad to Jordan two American prisoners of war and 40 journalists of various nationalities who had been released the previous day by the Iraqi authorities. Twelve Saudis — one member of the armed forces and 11 civilians — were released by Baghdad on 13 March; an ICRC aircraft took them back to Riyadh, along with the mortal remains of 14 Coalition soldiers.

Between 15 and 19 March, three repatriations took place overland via Ar'ar, enabling 999 Iraqi POWs to return home. At the same time, the ICRC registered 4,368 Kuwaiti POWs and civilian internees in Iraq.

At a meeting on 21 March in Riyadh, it was decided to increase the number of men repatriated each day from 500 to 1,000. As from 2 April, these numbers were further increased to 5,000 men per day.

Three other meetings between representatives of Iraq and the Coalition forces were held under ICRC auspices in Riyadh on 28 March and 12 and 29 April to evaluate the repatriation operations. At the meeting held on 12 April, it was also decided to set up a sub-committee, headed by the ICRC, to address the problem of persons missing in action and of mortal remains. This sub-committee had not yet met, however, by the end of 1991.



### **Prisoners of war who were not repatriated**

At the end of April, there were still some prisoners and internees who had not been repatriated. These included 22,000 Iraqi civilians who fled from southern Iraq during the revolt that broke out in mid-March and was put down by the Iraqi forces. Most of these people were from large Shiite towns such as Basra, Nasiriyah, Najaf and Karbala; when they crossed the Saudi border, they were interned in a camp at Rafha and were placed under the protection of the Fourth Geneva Convention; later they received refugee status. In addition, certain Iraqi prisoners of war, who had not been able to exercise their right to be repatriated during the first two months, returned to their country in small groups between April and July in a series of twice-weekly repatriations. Finally, other prisoners of war who did not wish to return to Iraq remained in the camps.

In August, as repatriations were drawing to an end, the ICRC informed all prisoners of war still in Saudi Arabia that they would have to make a final decision about whether they were willing to be repatriated, as they would no longer retain prisoner-of-war status once the repatriations were over. Some 13,000 men let the ICRC know that they had decided not to return to Iraq.

On 23 August, the ICRC informed the parties that the repatriation had come to an end and announced that the Iraqi citizens who had refused repatriation, and who were still in the Saudi camps henceforth came under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians. The Riyadh authorities gave refugee status to these people, who remained entitled to the protection of the Fourth Convention. The ICRC continued to visit them, principally to exchange family messages and to follow up requests made for news of relatives abroad.

Repatriations under the auspices of the ICRC enabled a total of 70,067 Iraqi prisoners of war to go home to their country; the mortal remains of 23 Iraqi soldiers were also returned. Repatriated Kuwaiti military personnel and civilians interned in Iraq totalled 5,038; five operations conducted by the ICRC took them back to Kuwait, beginning on 21

March. By the end of 1991, the ICRC had also repatriated a total of 4,299 Coalition POWs (Americans, British, Italians, Kuwaitis and Saudis), 1,436 civilians from seven different countries (Austria, Egypt, Kuwait, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United States) and the mortal remains of 16 people (American, British and Kuwaiti nationals). All captives had been registered by ICRC delegates and had confirmed to them that they wished to be repatriated.

On 9 September, the Kuwaiti authorities presented a list of 2,242 names of civilians and military personnel reported missing, and the ICRC passed on this list to the Iraqi authorities. The ICRC proposed that a meeting be held between representatives from Iraq and from the Coalition on this matter; the meeting took place in Geneva on 16 and 17 October.

One of the main issues discussed during this meeting concerned methods and operational procedures for achieving, in the shortest possible time, tangible results in the search for and repatriation of persons reported missing after the Gulf war. Three different but complementary approaches were then considered and recorded in the minutes of the meeting as proposals to the government of the Republic of Iraq for the search for missing persons (Saudi, Kuwaiti or other nationals).

In addition, the identification of Iraqi mortal remains was discussed and the delegation of Kuwait reaffirmed that the Kuwaiti authorities were willing to cooperate fully within the framework of the ICRC memorandum on that subject submitted to them on 10 September.

At the end of the year, no tangible results had been achieved in the search for and repatriation of missing Kuwaiti, Saudi and third-country nationals. The ICRC continued its efforts as a neutral intermediary between the authorities of the Republic of Iraq and the Coalition, in order to reach substantive agreement on the issue of missing persons.

### **Request from Iraq under the First Geneva Convention**

In September, following the publication of articles in the United States reporting that

many Iraqi soldiers had died buried in the trenches by American tanks during the ground offensive, the Iraqi authorities officially submitted a request to the ICRC in this connection. Through the media, the American authorities had admitted that enemy trenches had been filled in during the ground fighting, but they also pointed out that the standard warnings had been given in advance, to give enemy soldiers time to surrender.

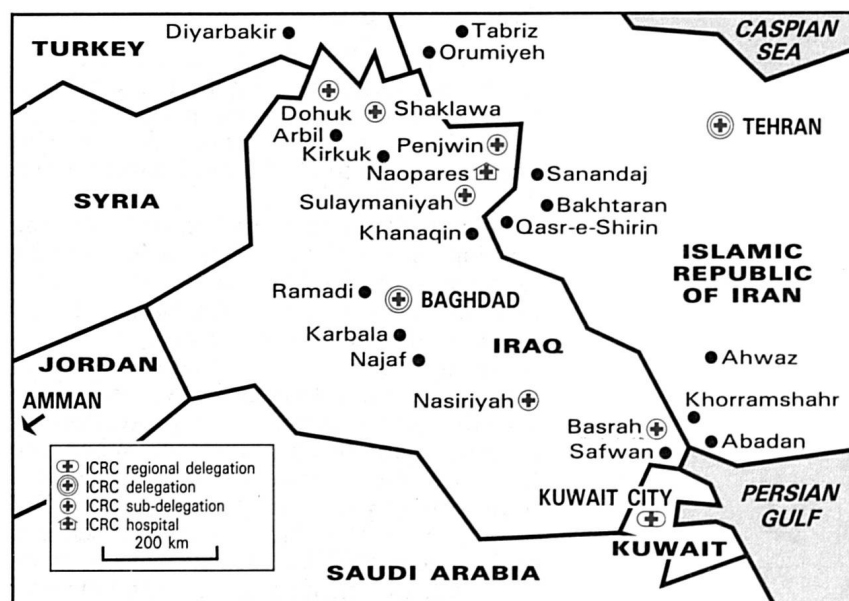
The Iraqi *note verbale* asked the ICRC to obtain information about this action to enable the bodies to be found, the deceased soldiers to be identified and the mortal remains to be returned.

The ICRC passed on the Iraqi request to the American authorities in a *note verbale*. The American authorities' reply was transmitted to the Iraqi government in the same way.

#### Assistance to Iraqi civilians during the international conflict

As soon as hostilities began, the ICRC greatly increased its diplomatic efforts to gain access to the regions most affected by the conflict. Its goal was to respond to the needs of civilians as quickly as possible, while maintaining its principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. In addition, it reminded the belligerents of the general rules of international humanitarian law destined to ensure protection for the civilian population, namely that belligerents must distinguish between military objectives and civilian objects, that they must never deliberately attack the civilian population as such or individual civilians, use famine as a weapon or block the free passage of relief supplies or of goods essential to survival.

Through its delegation in New York, the ICRC maintained constant contact with the United Nations Sanctions Committee to make sure it was aware of the gravity of the situation in Iraq from a humanitarian point of view. The ICRC also kept the members of the committee informed about the operation it had launched, as a neutral and independent intermediary, to assist the victims of the conflict.



As mentioned earlier, top priority was given to helping the Iraqi water department provide drinking water sufficient in quantity and quality for the population, and to supplying Baghdad hospitals and orphanages with medicine, basic relief supplies and food via the Ministries of Health and of Social Affairs. Mobile units to purify water ("waterlines") were set up in Baghdad, while ICRC sanitary engineers — who had arrived at the end of February — worked to repair existing installations. The ICRC was the only organization to remain in Iraq once hostilities began and throughout the conflict; the relief convoys sent from Iran (and later also from Jordan) allowed its delegates to provide aid, modest when compared with the needs but precious nevertheless, during active hostilities. During this period, too, ICRC delegates travelled outside the capital to assess needs, often under dangerous conditions.

By the middle of March, the delegation staff in Baghdad had risen from four to nearly 200 expatriates, most of whom were specialists in the medical and sanitation fields (including 94 doctors and nurses sent by the Algerian Red Crescent, who worked in several different hospitals in the capital).



### Occupied Iraqi territory

When a revolt flared up in southern Iraq at the beginning of March, the Coalition armed forces were still occupying a part of Iraqi territory extending between Samawa and Safwan and up to the border between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Most of the inhabitants had fled from the fighting. Some 15,000 of them had sought refuge with the Coalition forces, who accommodated them in makeshift camps. ICRC delegates were able to move freely in the occupied territory and noted that there was no tension there and that the provisions of the Fourth Convention on the protection of civilians were being respected. When the Coalition forces announced that they would soon withdraw from the territory, the ICRC recommended that until government services could be re-established, arrangements be made to provide sufficient food, water and medical care, in particular for the most vulnerable groups (pregnant women, children and the elderly). It also recommended that steps be taken by the Coalition forces to ensure that the protection of certain groups of people who had sought refuge with them was maintained.

### Internal conflicts in Iraq

When singularly violent fighting erupted in the principal towns of southern Iraq, leading to extensive destruction, within a few days over 100,000 civilians fled to Iran. Soon after, the Kurdish revolt broke out in the north, causing an exodus of hundreds of thousands of people. In the weeks that followed, ICRC delegates carried out missions to evaluate needs, which turned out to be enormous, in both northern and southern regions. In the south, the medical and sanitary infrastructure had been largely destroyed, while in the north men, women and children were fleeing in panic, exposed to the cold, to hunger and to illness.

The ICRC asked the government for permission to send its delegates to the regions concerned, evaluate needs and help the victims of the conflicts in the north and the south. The Iraqi authorities responded by allowing it to travel and to set up logistics

facilities and radio communications throughout the territory, including the northern zone held by the Kurdish combatants (*peshmergas*).

Planning to take in assistance quickly and in large amounts until other organizations could take over, the ICRC thereupon launched an emergency operation for the Kurdish population on both Iraqi and Iranian soil. The ICRC's plan of action was twofold: a relief operation for the Shiite civilians in southern Iraq and in Iranian Khuzestan, and a second operation for the Kurds in northern Iraq and in the three Iranian provinces along the border.

The ICRC's operations were readjusted after mid-1991, when United Nations operations in Iraq gradually got under way following an agreement signed on 18 April between the UN Secretary-General's special representative, Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan, and the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Hussein. This agreement focused on resolving problems of a humanitarian nature resulting from the international armed conflict. It provided for the return of displaced people and refugees to their places of origin as and when the situation reverted to normal in Iraq and in Kuwait, and for important logistical means to be employed to provide returnees with assistance. The document mentioned the operation carried out in parallel by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

### Assistance in southern Iraq

The survey carried out by an ICRC team on 15 March in the region of Basra, Nasiriyah and Amarah showed that many towns and villages were deserted or in ruins, that hospitals and dispensaries had been looted and that some of the inhabitants had fled towards the Iranian border.

The ICRC placed two teams of delegates in Basra and Nasiriyah to provide emergency assistance. At the same time, delegates based in Baghdad were able to help the civilian population in the two towns of Najaf and Karbala. ICRC medical teams restocked the hospitals and dispensaries of the region with medical and other supplies, and a vast pro-

gramme was set up to improve sanitation and provide drinking water. From April to June, thousands of litres of drinking water were distributed every day. In addition, specific medicine was distributed in a campaign against diarrhoeal illnesses, which were steadily assuming epidemic proportions, especially among children. During this period, an emergency operation was also being conducted in Iran (see below).

### Kurdish revolt in northern Iraq

Following the cease-fire and the revolt in the south, Kurdish combatants opposed to the government in Baghdad took up arms and soon seized a large part of Iraqi Kurdistan, controlling the towns of Arbil, Dohuk, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah.

In late March the Iraqi armed forces reversed the situation and put down the rebellion, thus giving rise to an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians who tried to flee to Turkey or to Iran. Some 600,000 of them were stranded in the mountains, in extremely severe climatic conditions.

While television screens the world over showed viewers the suffering of the Kurdish population, sparking outrage in Western public opinion, the Coalition forces decided to launch an operation under military supervision to assist the northern regions of Iraq (Operation "Provide Comfort").

In Turkey, ICRC delegates carried out surveys in the border region and requested authorization from the Turkish government to help the Iraqi Kurds who had succeeded in crossing the border. The ICRC received a negative response from the authorities.

A first survey of needs was carried out in Kurdistan, in preparation for emergency aid to be transported from Baghdad into isolated areas, for relief supplies to be brought in from Iran, and for medical teams to be based in the region.

Warehouses were opened in Kani Masi and Shaklaw, and a logistical base established in Penjwin. Tents, blankets, kitchen utensils and stoves were distributed along with food rations (cereals, oil, beans, etc.). The ICRC

was thus eventually providing food aid for about 200,000 people throughout Kurdistan. In September, in accordance with the agreement signed by Iraq and the United Nations, UNHCR<sup>1</sup> took over these assistance programmes, with one exception: in the Penjwin region, the ICRC continued to provide assistance for some 10,000 Kurdish families in need. This programme was continuing at the end of 1991.

The ICRC's assistance operation also included medical care given by mobile teams and by a field hospital set up in deserted buildings in Naopares, in the region held by the *peshmergas*. The field hospital (worth 1.5 million Swiss francs) was put at the ICRC's disposal by the Finnish Red Cross and began providing care in August. By the end of 1991 the medical team sent from Finland to run the hospital, assisted by Kurdish staff (nurses, anaesthetists) had treated 238 in-patients (including 141 war wounded) and 328 out-patients and had performed 413 operations. The expatriate staff also provided training for local employees.

### Protection for Kurdish wounded and prisoners

In July and then again in September and October, renewed fighting flared up between the *peshmergas* and the Iraqi army. ICRC delegates were authorized to cross front lines and were able to conduct operations from Baghdad and at the Iranian border to protect and assist civilians, prisoners and the wounded.

The main clashes took place on 6 and 8 October in the province of Suleymaniyah, where dozens of wounded soldiers were evacuated by the ICRC to the hospital in Naopares.

In some fifteen places of detention, ICRC delegates visited and brought emergency relief supplies to some 4,000 soldiers and nearly 300 officers of the Iraqi army, taken prisoner by the Kurdistan Front. As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC facilitated the return

<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

of all the prisoners held by the *peshmergas*. In this way 13 of the wounded treated at Naopares were able to go home to their families on 14 October, followed by 24 more ten days later. The ICRC was not present, however, when the Kurdistan Front released the soldiers and officers mentioned above, and it was not able to act on behalf of *peshmerga* combatants captured by the Iraqi armed forces.

### Relief operation in Iran

Following the Iranian authorities' agreement to the organization of a relief operation from Iranian territory on behalf of the Iraqi population, stocks of relief supplies and a field hospital, sent by the National Societies, were airlifted to Tehran at the beginning of the year. As soon as the fighting broke out between Iraq and the Coalition the ICRC was able to organize and send relief convoys to Baghdad, in cooperation with the Iranian Red Crescent.

When the internal conflicts flared up in southern and then in northern Iraq in March, the ICRC and the Iranian Red Crescent aided the Iraqi refugees. The uprising in the south resulted in an exodus of 60,000 people into Iranian Khuzestan, but with the fighting in the north, in less than two weeks over a million Kurdish refugees flooded into the Iranian provinces of Western Azerbaijan (the Piranshahr and Sardasht regions), Kurdistan (Baneh and Marivan) and Bakhtaran (Nowsud and Azgaleh).

For Iraqis who fled the south, the ICRC launched an emergency operation in mid-March, first of all to evacuate war casualties in the border zone, and second, to give shelter to civilians in transit camps in Iran. Dozens of war casualties were transported daily by Iranian Red Crescent ambulances and treated in the hospitals at Khorramshahr. With the help of medical teams from the German Red Cross and then the Swedish Red Cross, two camps were built. The first, able to provide temporary shelter for 5,000 people, was set up at Shalamsheh, near Khorramshahr, five kilometres from the Iraqi border. The second camp, constructed at Shenaneh with help

from the Danish Red Cross, was designed to accommodate 10,000 people. Other camps under the responsibility of the government, further away from the border, took refugees in for longer periods of time.

In the three provinces bordering Iraqi Kurdistan, the ICRC operation assumed a dimension equivalent to that of the Kurds' tragic plight. Faced with a human tide of one million exhausted, sick and frightened people, the Iranian authorities and the Red Crescent Society set up a massive assistance operation to which the ICRC gave substantial support.

Sub-delegations were established at Orumiyeh (Western Azerbaijan), Tabriz (Eastern Azerbaijan), Bakhtaran (in the province of the same name), and Sanandaj (Kurdistan). Through the Iranian Red Crescent, the ICRC brought relief to over half a million refugees: a total of 16,400 tents (each able to provide shelter for at least 10 people), over 500,000 blankets and 3,400 tonnes of food were distributed between March and July. Former bakeries were put back into working order, enabling the food rations to be supplemented by distributions of bread. Medical care was provided by mobile teams seconded by about ten National Societies, and teams of sanitary engineers worked to improve hygiene facilities, in particular in the Red Crescent camps in the region of Nowsud. The ICRC also built and ran two camps for over 50,000 people, in Oshnavieh (Western Azerbaijan) and Serias (Bakhtaran).

### Water purification programme in Iraq

The water purification programme, launched at the beginning of March to serve the entire country, was a unique example for the ICRC of an operation aimed at helping local services rapidly to restore supplies of drinking water.

The ICRC tackled the problem in several different ways. To meet the drinking water needs of hospitals and health centres, the ICRC set up a programme to distribute purified water in one-litre plastic bags. Two units, stationed in Baghdad and in Basra, each produced about 35,000 litres of drinking water

per day in one-litre bags ready for distribution. A third unit, operating for a while in Nasiriyah, had a capacity of 10,000 litres per day. From 13 March to mid-September, a total of 6.9 million bags of drinking water were distributed to 28 hospitals and medical centres and to 41 schools in Baghdad, to 15 hospitals and dispensaries in Basra province and 16 in Nasiriyah province, as well as to a dozen more in the regions of Najaf, Karbala and Hillah. In addition, tanker lorries supplied drinking water to neighbourhoods in several urban centres in southern and northern Iraq, while two mobile water purification units (each able to produce 60,000 litres daily) were in operation on various sites providing refuge for displaced people in Kurdistan and in the south. Some 30 water tanks, each holding 70-90,000 litres, were set up in Basra, Najaf and Nasiriyah in the south, and in Penjwin and Shaklawa in the north. In addition, over 250 million litres of drinking water were transported between April and December, equivalent to 90 convoys of 10 cubic metres per day for nine months. In Kurdistan during this period, measures were being taken to restore and maintain the cleanliness of 25 springs and repair some 20 wells and other installations to pump and provide drinking water.

The ICRC also supplied the various Iraqi water services with chemicals to treat water (over 180 tonnes of chlorine, 70 tonnes of chlorine derivatives and 115 tonnes of aluminium sulphate), and with maintenance material and generators. A programme to supply a significant number of spare parts vital for the operation of water stations was launched in July and August, and 47 chlorination units (low and high capacity) along with dosing pumps for aluminium sulphate, electrical circuitry and five 110 KVA generators for a total value of 1.5 million Swiss francs were placed at the water services' disposal. Some 40 sanitary engineers, experts and technicians from 12 countries<sup>2</sup> participated in this programme in Iraq.

The water purification programme warded off the cholera and typhus epidemics that were threatening the population. Similarly, the programme launched early in April to combat diarrhoea among infants saved the lives of thousands of young children who had gastroenteritis or typhoid fever. More than 700 tonnes of IV fluid, antibiotics and rehydration salts were given to dispensaries and hospitals in southern Iraq over a period of seven months.

Lastly, the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary *vis-à-vis* the Iraqi Ministry of Health by providing medicine and other medical supplies for Iraqi hospitals and health centres, facilitating the resumption of relations between Baghdad and other governments for the provision of basic medicines, and arranging for donations to the Iraqi Red Crescent. The medical assistance given throughout Iraq in 1991 reached a total value of 21.2 million Swiss francs (including 4 million Swiss francs for operations in Kurdistan, 5.3 million Swiss francs for the water purification programme and 2.1 million Swiss francs for the programme to combat infant diarrhoea).

#### Nutritional surveys

From April to June and again in October-November, an ICRC nutritionist was in Iraq to assess the food situation and the population's nutritional needs, giving special attention to the Penjwin region in the north. Her reports highlighted the effects of the international conflict and the internal strife on the food supply for the population and made it possible to gauge the impact of the assistance provided by the ICRC and UNHCR in northern Iraq. These reports were transmitted for information purposes to the United Nations Sanctions Committee (see below).

#### Relations with the United Nations

The ICRC contacted the United Nations Secretary-General, the Security Council and the Sanctions Committee several times under the provisions of international humanitarian law concerning the free passage of food and medicine for civilians. These contacts were taken up by ICRC delegates based in New

<sup>2</sup> Algeria, Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.



York, as well as during several high-level missions (one by the ICRC President), to notify the Sanctions Committee of the fact that the supplies imported into Iraq by the ICRC — in particular chemicals and fuel — were destined for humanitarian purposes and were thus in accordance with the embargo. The ICRC also informed the Sanctions Committee about the possible consequences of the embargo on the food supply and on medical care. ICRC statements concerning the situation of civilians were corroborated by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, in his report after returning from a survey in Iraq.

In November, Professor Marco Mumenthaler, a member of the ICRC, went with the ICRC's Director of Operations to New York to draw the attention of the members of the Sanctions Committee to the tremendous medical and nutritional needs observed during a mission to Iraq from 22 to 31 October — needs far beyond the scope of humanitarian organizations. They appealed to the member States of the Security Council and to Iraq to find an acceptable solution in humanitarian matters, and thus to limit the suffering of the Iraqi people.

During the entire operation, there was excellent cooperation between the ICRC and the WFP,<sup>3</sup> which provided much of the food required for the ICRC's assistance programmes throughout the affected regions.

### Relief and logistics

Considerable logistical means were needed for the Movement's assistance operation, conducted by the ICRC in Iraq and Iran. Donors contributed a total of over 27,408 tonnes of goods, for a value of 45.5 million Swiss francs: 16,500 tonnes were distributed, the rest stocked, some was handed over to the WFP. Over 10,000 of these tonnes consisted of basic foodstuffs distributed in Kurdistan; 7,600 tonnes went to Iraqi refugees in Iran (this included nearly 3,400 tonnes of food and was worth 42.5 million Swiss francs). All these

relief supplies came from a score of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies<sup>4</sup> and other donors, such as the European Community, the WFP and various governments.

The ICRC had to meet the logistical challenge of transporting over 13,000 tonnes of relief to Iran between January and June, including 1,938 tonnes taken by air (39 flights). The ICRC delegations in Amman (Jordan) and in Tehran (Iran) actively joined in the relief operation, obtaining facilities from the authorities concerned, supervising the arrival of shipments from the Movement and organizing convoys to Iraq. Other convoys went via Turkey with the permission of the authorities.

The ICRC delegation in Amman, which had received all facilities from the Jordanian authorities, organized transport for nearly 22,000 tonnes of food aid to the Iraqi capital between March and September. The delegation took delivery of these goods in Amman or in the port of Aqaba, then loaded them onto 105 convoys using a total of 866 lorries. A logistical infrastructure had to be set up for this purpose: some 20 local employees were hired, four expatriates were sent to back up the delegation and arrangements were made with two commercial forwarding agents.

The delegation in Tehran also greatly increased its activities, since the authorities had consented as early as December 1990 to ICRC assistance programmes in cooperation with the National Society. A total of 262 tonnes of emergency aid were thus forwarded to Baghdad, mainly during the hostilities. At the height of the operation on behalf of Iraqi refugees in Khuzestan (in the south-west) and in the provinces bordering Kurdistan (in the north), 120 expatriates were at work in the camps, including 80 members of 13 National Societies — medical teams, technicians, etc. (see below).

<sup>3</sup> World Food Programme.

<sup>4</sup> Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Red Cross in Taiwan.

### Transmission of family messages

As mentioned earlier, the ICRC carried out the registration and repatriation of both Iraqi and Coalition prisoners of war and interned civilians. With communications cut off between Iraq, Kuwait and the rest of the world, it also forwarded over 40,000 family messages among relatives separated by events in the region.

### Cooperation with National Societies

The humanitarian operation for victims of conflicts in the Gulf region was, as stated above, an operation carried out by the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Without the rapid, massive and effective mobilization of National Societies, it would not have been possible to meet the enormous needs engendered by the conflict between Iraq and the Coalition forces, and by the ensuing internal conflicts in southern and northern Iraq. The National Societies reacted immediately to the ICRC's appeals, sending relief supplies and seconding qualified personnel for work in the field.

The Movement's response was impressive: in the preparatory phase, early in January, some 600 personnel were standing by within days and ready to leave. Between March and December 1991, a total of 489 staff seconded by 21 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were involved in the operation in Iraq, Iran, Jordan and Kuwait. Some of these Societies were responding for the first time to an ICRC appeal for an international emergency operation. In the field, close cooperation developed with the National Societies of the region, whose support was indispensable for the conduct of ICRC operations.

In this connection an agreement was reached on 22 February between the ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent, to set up a joint programme in areas related to Tracing Agency work and to food aid and medical assistance (including the water supply and public hygiene). This agreement was put into practice while the international armed conflict was still raging, during the period when the ICRC was the only organization of its kind remaining in Baghdad, and also covered a long-term

programme of aid for the development of the National Society, in particular for staff training.

New forms of cooperation between donor National Societies and the ICRC were established in the area of material support. Several consortia were created, each grouping up to four National Societies and each entirely responsible for supplying and running a 'camp module' and thus providing all material (including medical), all logistical means, and the personnel required to build and to run the facility. Each camp was designed to shelter 30,000 displaced people or refugees.

Lastly, the International Movement's integration into the entire operation was given a formal basis by the signature of a protocol agreement between the ICRC and the Federation on 16 January, based on the Statutes of the Movement and the Agreement governing relations between the two institutions. Representatives from the Federation thus took part in all working meetings, which were held under the direction of the ICRC in Geneva and in the field until 23 March. On that day, the Federation announced to the National Societies that the integrated operation was to end and that each institution would henceforth carry out its activities separately.

### Financial resources

On 17 January, the ICRC launched an appeal for 141 million Swiss francs, which was modified on 9 April to a total of 188.2 million Swiss francs. In all, the cost of the emergency operation for 1991 came to 91,716,665 Swiss francs in cash and 90,984,442 in kind and services. Donations received from governments, National Societies and others amounted to 209,550,377 million Swiss francs, i.e. 118.6 million in cash and 90.9 million in kind and services. Among the contributions in kind, particular mention must be made of those from the European Community (some 9 million Swiss francs) and the WFP (2.5 million Swiss francs).



### Personnel

In addition to some 80 ICRC delegates already based in the Middle East, and to the personnel seconded by the other components of the Movement, the ICRC in early January made 50 more delegates available for imminent departure. Several dozen people working in the different departments at ICRC headquarters went on short missions to provide back-up for the teams in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait. When activities reached their peak, over 350 expatriates were working in the Arabian peninsula.

## KUWAIT

Despite numerous approaches made to the Iraqi authorities, the ICRC was unable to carry out its mandate in Kuwait while Iraqi troops occupied the country: the occupying power refused to guarantee access to ICRC delegates.

Kuwait was liberated on 28 February by the Coalition forces. The very next day, seven ICRC delegates (including one doctor and one sanitary engineer) and a Federation delegate arrived in Kuwait City, bringing almost four tonnes of medical supplies with them.

In cooperation with the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society, a survey of needs was immediately carried out, focusing on medical care and hygiene. Although some assistance was required, especially to allow hospitals to resume their activities, the ICRC concentrated primarily on protecting those persons who came within its mandate under the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions: all Iraqi nationals (military and civilian), as well as non-Kuwaiti civilians who had no diplomatic protection (stateless persons, Jordanians, Palestinians, Sudanese, Yemenites, etc.).

### Protection for detainees

As numerous arrests had been made, ICRC delegates began visiting detainees on 23 March, first in a military prison and then in other prisons and police stations. The ICRC informed the Kuwaiti authorities of its obser-

vations. It also asked that effective steps be taken without delay to stop the excesses being committed by individuals or groups of individuals in the country. Visits to detainees were continuing at the end of 1991.

### Tracing Agency

Following the liberation of Kuwait, hundreds of people came into the ICRC offices every day to try to contact family members abroad or to search for a missing relative. Four tracing offices were opened in the capital's most highly populated neighbourhoods to meet this need. The distribution of Red Cross messages quickly became their main activity: to begin with, news was delivered directly to the families, then, when telephones were working again, news was most often transmitted by phone. When the volume of activities diminished during the second half of the year, the ICRC tracing offices were closed.

### Trials

In May, trials began of people accused of collaborating with the Iraqi army during the occupation. The ICRC attended the hearings and intervened when necessary to ensure that the trials were conducted in accordance with judicial procedures and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

### Steps taken concerning expulsions

At the beginning of June, when expulsions to Iraq of non-Kuwaiti nationals began, the ICRC insisted that the authorities must respect humanitarian principles — particularly the principle of *non-refoulement*, i.e., no forcible return. The ICRC also proposed measures that would enable the departure from Kuwait of unwanted foreigners to take place under acceptable conditions, namely that the ICRC be notified of persons in detention and of those coming under expulsion orders and be given the possibility to inform their families; that ICRC delegates visit persons who were to be expelled to ensure that they had freely chosen their destination; that families be allowed to remain together and, in accordance

with the provisions of the Fourth Convention, to take their property with them; and finally, that any expulsions be carried out at regular intervals at the border, with ICRC delegates present on both sides.

In parallel, beginning at the end of March, ICRC delegates made daily visits to the camp at Al-Abdali, in the border region between Iraq and Kuwait, where 1,000 civilians of different nationalities had been gathered while awaiting expulsion from Kuwait. The delegates' aim was to provide protection and tracing services for these civilians. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with the help of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent, took charge of the camp in the middle of March. So many expellees were flooding in that a second camp had to be opened (Abdali II): the number of people there rose to 7,000 before finally stabilizing at 4,800 when the evacuation programme began, run by the International Organization for Migration. At the end of July, 1,200 people remained. Only 89 families of stateless people were accepted by Kuwait when the camp was closed in October; some had been accepted by other countries, whilst others had decided to go back to Iraq or had been forced to return there.

During this period, issues related to the repatriation of prisoners of war and detained civilians were discussed in Riyadh at meetings held under ICRC auspices between representatives of Iraq and of the Coalition. On 5 May, the Kuwaiti government appointed a "National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs" and placed it under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

#### Headquarters agreement

The President of the ICRC made an official visit to Kuwait at the invitation of the country's highest authorities from 28 to 30 October. On this occasion, President Sommaruga signed the headquarters agreement establishing the regional delegation of the ICRC for the Arabian Peninsula in Kuwait City (see also *Regional Delegations*). The regional delegation had previously been based in Geneva at ICRC headquarters, then

during the armed conflict between the Coalition and Iraq it had been moved to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. During his visit, the ICRC President, who was accompanied by the regional delegate and two other staff members, was received by the Emir of Kuwait, by the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, and by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In discussions with the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Interior and the Deputy Ministers of Health and of Justice, the President had the opportunity to touch on the still unresolved problems of humanitarian concern resulting from the Gulf conflict, in particular the cases of missing persons and the plight of persons entitled to protection under the Fourth Geneva Convention. President Sommaruga also met the President of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent and members of his staff.

### CONFLICT BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ

Following the repatriation of nearly 80,000 Iranian and Iraqi prisoners of war in 1990, operations were brought to a halt at the end of 1990 by problems concerning prisoners of war still in the camps or refusing to return to their country and persons reported missing.

Three repatriations were carried out in 1991 — on 15 January, 28 February and 22 November — allowing 747 Iraqi and 106 Iranian POWs to return to their families, but the repatriation process remained at a standstill, mainly because of the different positions adopted by the two countries on the question of persons reported missing in action. This point, and the conditions under which repatriations could resume, were discussed at meetings of the Joint Technical Committee (JTC), set up in 1990 with ICRC participation to bring together representatives of the two countries. As no progress had been made, the ICRC again took steps in July, presenting a *note verbale* to the Iranian authorities. In this document, the institution underlined the fact that the Joint Technical Committee's work had not been brought to

a successful conclusion and, moreover, that the ICRC had still not been granted access to all prisoners of war on Iranian soil. Referring to interviews without witness that were to be conducted by ICRC delegates (who had not visited the camps since 1987) to determine whether each prisoner was willing to be repatriated, the ICRC pointed out that these interviews lost all credibility if there was no precise schedule for repatriation. It added that in any case, POWs refusing repatriation retained prisoner-of-war status and should therefore benefit from all the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention until the end of the overall repatriation (in particular, the notification of their identity to the ICRC and the exchange of family messages).

On 21 November, the ICRC appealed to the spiritual guide of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, requesting that his influence be used to solve the problems still pending with regard to the release and return of Iraqi prisoners of war.

Near the end of the year, both parties in the Joint Technical Committee informed the ICRC that they agreed to resume discussions on this problem.

On 18 December, the ICRC helped with the identification and repatriation of the mortal remains of the former Oil Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, captured by the Iraqi forces at the beginning of the conflict, in 1980.

#### **Activities for civilians**

The ICRC gave continued attention to the case of Iranian civilians interned in the Al-Tash and Shomeli camps, situated on Iraqi soil. Because of the internal conflict that developed in southern Iraq at the end of the international conflict, the Shomeli camp was closed in March and its occupants transferred to the Al-Tash camp. UNHCR took charge of providing assistance and protection for the refugees, in accordance with its mandate, and began repatriating those who wished to return to their country. The ICRC continued to visit Al-Tash, in particular to maintain the exchange of family messages.

Two missions were carried out during the year in the governorates of Wasit and Misan

to assess possible needs among Iranian civilians from Khuzestan, displaced in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict between the two countries.

## **EGYPT**

In addition to its ongoing activities arising from the Arab-Israeli conflict, the ICRC delegation in Cairo kept close track of repercussions of the conflict between Iraq and the Coalition. The volume of family messages more than tripled in 1991, reaching a total of 550. To ensure that Egyptian prisoners of war and civilians, protected by the Geneva Conventions, could return home, the ICRC delegate also greatly increased his contacts with the Egyptian authorities concerned. For the same purpose, close cooperation was set up with the ICRC delegations in Amman, Baghdad and Riyadh.

## **IRAN**

#### **Visits to detainees**

Following an invitation from the Iranian authorities to visit the places of detention in the country, addressed to the ICRC on 13 August 1990, an agreement concerning the practical arrangements for such visits was concluded on 21 November 1991.

## **ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES**

#### **Activities related to the conflict in the Gulf region**

The conflict between the Iraqi and the Coalition armed forces had major repercussions on the activities of the ICRC in Israel and the occupied territories during the first quarter of 1991.

The ICRC was one of the few humanitarian organizations to maintain its delegates in the occupied territories during the events. Their

presence served to protect the Palestinian population there, and they regularly approached the occupying power to ease security measures taken as a result of the conflict in the Gulf region.

As soon as hostilities began between Iraqi forces and those of the Coalition, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights were placed under strict curfew, and the checkpoints allowing passage between the occupied territories and Arab countries, in particular Jordan, were closed. Apprehension as to the possible use of chemical warheads was felt among the population when Iraq launched Scud missiles at Israel. The ICRC made recommendations to the authorities for the protection of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and specifically for places of detention, requesting that protective material be distributed and instructions given for precautions against chemical weapons attacks (gas masks, atropine, hermetically sealed rooms, and so on); it also recommended that the curfew be maintained within limits allowing residents to circulate in emergency cases.

The curfew had a considerable effect on living conditions in the occupied territories. Many of the charity organizations working in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip temporarily withdrew their personnel and thus cut short their assistance programmes. Moreover, supply and transport problems caused several villages to be completely isolated for long periods of time.

While UNRWA<sup>5</sup> launched a special food aid programme for population groups affected by the restriction of movement and supplies, the ICRC focused on providing medical assistance to ensure that the hospitals in the occupied territories could continue working despite the situation.

This assistance programme was developed along three main lines: support for Palestinian private hospitals; medical/surgical teams sent in to offset the lack of specialized personnel; and distribution of medicines to existing medical facilities.

Following a donation by the European Community of six million dollars to the

Netherlands Red Cross, a team sent by this National Society arrived in Jerusalem in January. This team was responsible for management and accounting in the use of these funds, which covered the running costs for eight private Palestinian hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza for a period of six months.

The ICRC assumed responsibility for the replacement of surgical staff at the Al Ahli Hospital in the Gaza Strip when medical personnel from foreign countries left the territories. The first surgical team, sent in at the beginning of February, was seconded by the Finnish Red Cross; a second team provided by the Hungarian National Society came in to replace their Finnish colleagues until the end of June. When the expatriate doctors who had previously been providing care returned to the hospital, the ICRC was able to end this programme.

In the same context, the ICRC provided emergency medical supplies for 250 dispensaries and primary care centres run by local organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to observations made by ICRC delegates, the prolonged curfew imposed by the authorities had significant economic consequences for the population and made it more difficult than usual to have access to medical care. In response to this need, the ICRC distributed standard sets of medicines and basic medical supplies for a total value of 1.2 million Swiss francs.

#### **Activities resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict**

The conflict in the Gulf region did not detract attention from the persistent problems linked to 24 years of occupation in the territories occupied by Israel.

The ICRC considers that the conditions for application of the Fourth Geneva Convention are fulfilled in all of the territories occupied by Israel (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem).

The Israeli authorities consider that in view of the *sui generis* status of the occupied territories, the Fourth Geneva Convention does not apply *de jure* to these areas, but they have

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Relief Work Agency.

stated, since 1967, that they would act *de facto* in accordance with the humanitarian provisions of that Convention.

In 1991, the ICRC intensified its approaches to the authorities, particularly on all issues in connection with mass arrests and detention, including the situation of detainees under interrogation, the settlement policy in the occupied territories, administrative harassment and collective punishment, the destruction of houses, expulsions and, since the beginning of the *intifada*, the use of certain means of repression (particularly the use of live ammunition against civilians).

In 1991, the negotiations also focused on other issues, for example the request that the ICRC be notified systematically of all persons arrested, that its delegates be granted the possibility to visit (with 48 hours' notice) detainees held in transit centres (military governorates) and, finally, that procedures be set up to resume family visits to prisons and military camps. Access to the military governorates was granted in July and families began visiting detainees again in September.

The ICRC's Director of Operations visited Israel from 22 to 27 March 1991, accompanied by the Deputy Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa, for high-level meetings on these issues. Other steps were taken in parallel by the ICRC in Geneva with representatives of Israel's permanent mission and by the head of delegation in Israel with the authorities concerned.

The Director of Operations visited Israel again from 16 to 18 October. During this visit, he presented the government with a written report giving a humanitarian assessment of the situation in the occupied territories, focusing on the principal violations of the Fourth Convention noted by the ICRC and asking for real improvements to be made by the Israeli authorities.

#### Visits to detainees

In 1991 ICRC delegates and doctors carried out regular visits to protected persons who were being held in 54 places of detention (military detention centres and prisons, including police stations and temporary or tran-

sit detention centres). A total of 939 visits were conducted to 22,000 security detainees and administrative detainees, 6,000 of whom were newly registered. Material assistance provided for these detention centres was valued at over one million Swiss francs.

The ICRC took further steps during the past year on behalf of persons captured in southern Lebanon, trying to obtain access to those detained in the prison of Khiam, in the "security zone", as well as to those transferred — in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention — to places of detention on Israeli soil. ICRC delegates asked for access in order to register these people, visit them in the places they are being held, and transmit news of them to their families in Lebanon (see *Lebanon*).

On 11 September, the ICRC repatriated the mortal remains of an Israeli soldier killed in Lebanon in 1983.

Notifications transmitted by the detaining authorities and the registration of detainees by the ICRC enabled the delegation to issue 22,680 certificates of detention in 1991. Some 45,500 family messages were exchanged during the year as well, between detainees and their families in the occupied territories or between people in these territories and relatives living abroad.

## JORDAN

For a time, the ICRC delegation in Jordan was on an emergency footing in 1991 because of the conflict in the Gulf (see the section on this subject, above).

Otherwise, the delegation's efforts were centred primarily on providing services for Palestinians, often separated from their families because of the situation in the territories occupied by Israel. A total of over 27,500 family messages were exchanged in 1991. In addition, over 370 requests for news about people in Iraq or in Kuwait were sent in response to relatives' enquiries.

#### Visits to places of detention

As in previous years, ICRC delegates carried out regular visits to security detainees and



detainees under interrogation in Jordanian detention centres. The events in the Gulf created tension and, as a result, more arrests were made than in the past. In July the authorities uncovered and incarcerated the members of a group suspected of having been involved in terrorist attacks. Following these arrests, ICRC visits were suspended by the judicial authorities. New steps were taken in this matter (in particular a letter from ICRC President Sommaruga to HRH Crown Prince Hassan), and the ICRC obtained access to these detainees in September. In all, 51 visits were conducted to 14 places of detention where over 4,500 detainees were being held, 677 of them for security reasons (621 of these were seen for the first time). Material assistance valued at about 40,000 Swiss francs was distributed in the prisons.

## LEBANON

After the establishment of "Greater Beirut" in December 1990, the deployment of the Lebanese Army and the disbanding of the militias allowed most of the Lebanese population to enjoy a relatively calm year for the first time in 17 years. Nevertheless, the situation remained tense, in particular in the south, where violent clashes took place during the gradual deployment of the Lebanese Army between July and October and along the demarcation line with the "security zone" set up and controlled by Israel and the "South Lebanon Army". The ICRC delegation remained staffed, as before, by seven expatriates in Beirut, whose activities were focused on the southern part of the country. The security measures taken in 1989, following the abduction of two ICRC delegates, continued to be applied.

Two missions were carried out from ICRC headquarters to Lebanon during the year — by the Delegate General for the Middle East and North Africa, in August, and by the Director of Operations, in November — to take stock of ICRC activities in Lebanon and in the region.

### Activities for detainees

With the extension of Lebanese Army control over the territory and the breaking-up of the militias, many places of detention controlled by the militias disappeared. ICRC delegates carried out 35 visits to 19 civilian and military places of detention throughout Lebanon, where they were able to see 1,175 detainees, 378 of them for the first time.

At the end of 1990, the ICRC obtained access to the detainees in Palestinian hands, in particular in the places of detention in Miye-Miye camp and in the re-education centre in Alman. These visits were suspended in February, following the deployment of the Lebanese Army in the south and the clashes that ensued. The ICRC took steps to try and return to these places of detention, and continued its efforts to obtain access to all places of detention in Lebanon, including those situated inside the "security zone". Despite numerous ICRC approaches to the Israeli forces and the "South Lebanon Army", Khiam prison, situated within the "security zone", remained closed to ICRC delegates as well as to the families of detainees held there.

### Assistance for civilians

Mass movements of the population to escape from the fighting were an important factor in Lebanon in the past: this was much less the case in 1991, thanks to the process of political and military stabilization, and thus the volume of assistance provided by the ICRC was considerably reduced during the year. However, civilians caught between the forces present in southern Lebanon remained the principal victims of military operations and acts of retaliation.

In February, when fighting broke out between Palestinian groups in the Sidon area, delegates took in emergency medical supplies to the dispensaries and hospitals there. A similar operation was launched when clashes occurred between Palestinian factions and the Lebanese Army in July. The ICRC regularly acted as a neutral intermediary, in particular in October, when it was able to help the civilian population of four villages situated along the demarcation line with the "security



zone" which were being blockaded by the Israeli forces and the "South Lebanon Army". The ICRC obtained permission to supply these villages (Aita Jabal, Arnoun, Haddatha and Yohmor) with food and drinking water (over 17,000 litres). Delegates also provided medical care and evacuated patients to nearby hospitals.

All in all, the ICRC supplied 1.8 tonnes of relief to Lebanon in 1991 for a value of nearly two million Swiss francs (including 1.2 million for food). Much of this aid was distributed by the Lebanese Red Cross.

### **Medical assistance**

The mobile clinics run by the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross resumed regular activities in May, visiting a dozen villages in the conflict zone in southern Lebanon and in the west Bekaa valley every three weeks. These clinics enabled civilians who were often isolated or unable to go to existing medical facilities to receive a minimum of medical care. In addition, the ICRC provided more than 376,000 Swiss francs' worth of medical supplies to hospitals and dispensaries, as well as support for the National Society's ambulance service.

The ICRC continued to provide support for its two orthopaedic workshops, one in Sidon (reopened in October 1990, with Lebanese personnel) and the other in Beit Chebab. The two centres received material valued at 657,000 Swiss francs in 1991. The Beit Chebab workshop is now run by the ICRC, following an agreement reached on 23 May 1991 with the Lebanese College for the Disabled.

The two centres treated, respectively, 376 and 579 patients; more than 970 prostheses and 700 orthoses were produced in 1991.

### **Tracing Agency**

The new internal political situation allowed communications to be re-established between various regions of the country that had previously been cut off from each other by front lines. The ICRC therefore had practically no more family messages to transmit inside Lebanon or between Lebanon and other

countries. However, with the outbreak of the conflict in the Gulf region, many people contacted the delegation in Beirut to get news about their relatives in Kuwait or Iraq: close to 300 requests for news were transmitted and the same number of positive replies received, while more than 14,000 messages were exchanged between family members separated by the events.

Finally, the ICRC continued its efforts to obtain information about the Israeli soldiers reported missing in Lebanon. In July ICRC delegates organized the repatriation of the mortal remains of one of these soldiers, killed in 1983. Furthermore, alongside the negotiations conducted by the United Nations Secretary-General to find a solution to the problem of hostages and missing persons in the Middle East, the ICRC facilitated arrangements for the release and transfer of detainees from the Khiam prison in September, October and December. The ICRC also arranged for the return of a Palestinian who had been expelled from the occupied territories in 1986, as well as the repatriation of the mortal remains of nine Lebanese combatants.

At the end of 1991 negotiations continued, as the hostages from Western countries had not yet all been granted their freedom. The ICRC repeated that it stood ready to provide operational support for a humanitarian solution to this problem. It also stated that only the formal notification of all persons in the hands of one party or another, leaving aside all considerations of reciprocity, would be able to bring about an overall solution, both for those still missing and for the return of detainees and hostages to their families.

## **SYRIA**

The conflict between Iraq and the Coalition had repercussions on the work of the ICRC delegation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as in the other countries of the region. As part of the logistical plan of action set up in the Middle East, large consignments of relief supplies were stocked in Damascus where the ICRC had received all necessary facilities from

the authorities concerned. ICRC modules for a camp to house 5,000 people, and modules sent by the Benelux National Societies for another camp to house 30,000 people, were stored in Damascus before being transported by lorry to Iran, where they were installed to provide shelter for Iraqi refugees. More than 30 delegates and technicians from the ICRC and from National Societies were at one time or another in transit in Syria, on their way to Iran.

The delegation also faced a greatly increased need for its tracing services — to search for people, transmit requests for news and exchange family messages. The volume of its activities in this area increased by 50% as

a result of the international conflict in the Gulf region. The delegation handled over 150 requests to trace missing persons or to obtain news about people in Iraq or Kuwait.

In addition, ICRC staff in Damascus continued to carry out activities throughout the year related to the situation in the territories occupied by Israel: 2,800 Red Cross messages were exchanged between Syria and other countries, and 9 transfers were organized for people to cross to Syria from the occupied Golan Heights and vice versa. Travel documents were issued for 254 people who had no papers but who had received an immigration visa.

## *North Africa*

### **WESTERN SAHARA CONFLICT**

The peace plan for the region, proposed in August 1990 by the United Nations, reached a new stage on 29 April 1991 with the adoption by the Security Council of the proposals and the plan for settlement contained in the Secretary-General's reports dated 18 June 1990 and 19 April 1991. In the second document, in paragraph 18, it is stipulated that: "The settlement proposals also provide for the exchange of prisoners of war. This will take place under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). My Special Representative will establish early contact with ICRC with a view to implementation of the exchange of prisoners as soon as possible after the cease-fire comes into effect on D-Day."

Since the beginning of the conflict in 1975, the ICRC has been concerned about the situation of prisoners of war on both sides (Sahrawi prisoners in Moroccan hands, Moroccans held by the Polisario front). ICRC delegates have seen only some of the prisoners intermittently during the last 15 years. The institution has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that it has never been in a position to ensure that these combatants receive the

protection to which they are entitled under the Geneva Conventions, and that the length of their captivity makes this situation all the more intolerable from a humanitarian point of view.

On 6 September a cease-fire went into effect as planned and the members of MINURSO<sup>6</sup> took up their duties within the framework of the peace plan. The ICRC addressed a *note verbale*, accompanied by a seven-point memorandum, to the Moroccan authorities on 4 September and to the Polisario Front on 6 September. This document presented the operational procedures to be used for the repatriation of prisoners of war, specifically pointing out that ICRC delegates must have access to all POWs to register them and determine whether or not they are freely willing to be repatriated, and that to this end, the lists of names of all the prisoners would have to be transmitted to the ICRC in good time.

In parallel, the ICRC continued its discussions with representatives of the United Nations (in particular at meetings between ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

de Cuellar on 28 August and, on 3 October, between ICRC Vice President Claudio Caratsch and the Special Representative of the United Nations, Mr. Johannes Manz). Between the end of October and mid-November, further

contact was taken up with the Polisario Front in New York and in Algiers, and with the Moroccan authorities in Rabat, but no significant progress was made. These discussions were still continuing at the end of 1991.

## REGIONAL DELEGATIONS

### ***ARABIAN PENINSULA (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Republic of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates)***

The ICRC regional delegation was based in Geneva. However, beginning on 5 August 1990 and for all of 1991, the regional delegate was in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) for work related to the conflict in the Persian Gulf. At the end of October, during the ICRC President's visit to Kuwait City, a headquarters agreement was signed establishing the regional delegation for the Arabian peninsula in this city.

For details of the operation carried out in connection with the conflict between the Coalition and Iraq following the occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces, please refer to the section *Conflict in the Gulf*, above.

**REPUBLIC OF YEMEN** — Two series of visits to places of detention were conducted in the Republic of Yemen, in November and December. Two teams of delegates, each of which included a doctor, saw a total of about 5,000 detainees in some 20 places of detention in the north of the country. Relief supplies were distributed in a few of the prisons, in collaboration with the Yemenite Red Crescent Society.

### ***TUNIS (Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Western Sahara)***

**ALGERIA** — As the situation was deteriorating and following the declaration of a state of siege on 5 June in Algeria, the ICRC offered its services to the government in order to visit people arrested because of the events.

The authorities gave their assent in August and a formal agreement was reached in October on procedures for visits. Beginning on 18 November, two teams of three delegates (each including a doctor) visited 13 places of detention under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and one military camp. Out of a total of nearly 8,000 detainees, the delegates registered some 30 people arrested following the events of June. At the end of 1991, the ICRC was pursuing discussions with the Algerian authorities in order to obtain access to all of those arrested.

**MAURITANIA** — In the operation launched to provide protection and assistance for civilian victims of the fighting in Mali, the ICRC regional delegation in Tunis served as a relay for contacts with the political and military authorities of the opposition movements and conducted humanitarian activities on Mauritanian soil. From 18 to 24 October, a delegate and a doctor travelled through eastern regions of Mauritania to discuss the conditions for the operation with the authorities and to agree on measures to help ensure the safety of the delegates in the conflict zone. During their visit, the delegates handed over some dissemination material, mainly related to the behaviour required of combatants.

From 5 to 26 November, a delegate and a doctor visited 12 places of detention under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, in Nouakchott and in the rest of Mauritania, where they saw nearly 600 detainees, including 10 held in connection with the rebellion in Mali (see also *Africa*).

**TUNISIA** — The agreement officially establishing the ICRC regional delegation for North Africa was signed on 11 January. Dur-

ing the conflict in the Gulf, the regional delegation was in contact with the authorities and the National Societies of the countries in the region, in particular with the Algerian Red Crescent, who wished to participate in the Movement's work in Iraq. The Algerian National Society sent a medical team of 93 people who worked under the auspices of the ICRC in the hospitals of Baghdad during and after the international armed conflict. The Moroccan Red Crescent also participated in

the Movement's humanitarian effort, sending over 200 tonnes of relief supplies for civilians in Iraq, for a value of 560,500 Swiss francs (see *Conflict in the Gulf*, above).

In addition, the regional delegate undertook several missions to meet officials, in particular concerning the Western Sahara conflict (see above) and the ICRC operation on behalf of the displaced people in Mali and in Mauritania (see *Africa*).

## **DISSEMINATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

### **The conflict in the Gulf**

Although the pressure of more urgent business and operational priorities left delegates with little time to spare for dissemination, they did arrange for publication of 30,000 copies of a special brochure (a bilingual Arabic/French version of the *Rules for Behaviour in Combat*) for distribution to the Coalition forces, and held impromptu dissemination sessions in field hospitals of the American armed forces.

In the course of many contacts they had with the Coalition General Staffs and with the ministries and diplomatic missions of the countries concerned, the ICRC delegates also acted as consultants in interpreting humanitarian law, in particular as concerned the capture of prisoners of war.

### **Egypt**

The Cairo delegation continued to cooperate with post-graduate students of international law, with the aim of compiling an annotated bibliography of books in Arabic on problems of international humanitarian law.

The delegation issued and distributed three brochures in Arabic, respectively on the treatment of prisoners of war, the protection of the civilian population in occupied territory, and the basic elements of international humanitarian law. It also arranged for translation into Arabic, publication and distribution of Colonel de Mulinen's *Essentials of the Law of War: Summary for Commanders*. Some 5,000 copies of this brochure

were delivered to the Egyptian armed forces for distribution to the commanding officers of troops engaged in Saudi Arabia in the context of the Gulf conflict.

### **Iraq**

Between April and June 1991, ICRC delegates gave about ten dissemination sessions, attended by approximately 600 people, at Bassorah University and various institutions in that province.

### **Israel and the occupied territories**

A one-day workshop-seminar was held in Israel for liaison officers of the Israeli armed forces.

In the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, the ICRC delegation organized seminars on international humanitarian law for about 100 Palestinian lawyers of the Arab Lawyers Committee.

### **Jordan**

In spite of the extra workload arising from the temporary transformation of the Amman delegation into a logistic base for ICRC activities in Iraq, the ICRC continued to cooperate on dissemination matters with the Jordan Red Crescent Society and the Ministry of Education, giving presentations to an audience of students and teachers in the framework of the *Red Cross and Red Crescent Days*, and holding bi-monthly dissemination sessions at the delegation from January

to May for students of governmental secondary schools.

In June the ICRC's delegate to the armed forces of the Middle East took up his post in Amman to facilitate relations with contacts in the region, and to set about planning a programme of regional seminars. The first of these was held in Lebanon (see below).

#### Lebanon

The delegation held numerous training sessions for members of the Lebanese Red Cross engaged in dissemination work.

The Amman-based delegate to the armed forces held a seminar on international humanitarian law from 9 to 12 December. The seminar was attended by about 30 instructors from the Lebanese armed forces.

#### Arabian Peninsula

##### — Saudi Arabia

The ICRC's efforts to spread knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law

and of the Movement's principles during the Gulf conflict did much to familiarize the countries of the Arabian Peninsula with the institution. Indeed, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and the recognition of the ICRC's mandate under the Geneva Conventions, as well as the deployment of ICRC delegates in the region, doubtless helped to make the ICRC better known to the authorities and armed forces of a region hitherto relatively unreceptive to its approaches.

##### — Republic of Yemen

In Yemen the ICRC supported the National Society's dissemination efforts.

#### Syria

The ICRC delegate distributed dissemination literature to young people participating in the *Mother and Care* medical programme organized by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent branches.

### RELIEF SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED BY THE ICRC IN 1991 MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Country (in French alphabetical order)	Medical assistance	Relief		Total
	Value in Sw. fr.	Value in Sw. fr.	(Tonnes)	Sw. fr.
Algeria .....	32,230			32,230
Iraq .....	20,607,966	16,239,483	11,290.9	36,847,449
Iran .....	5,492,255	33,898,490	7,000.7	39,390,745
Israel and the occupied territories .....	1,087,994	1,631,518	316.8	2,719,512
Jordan .....	25,523	377,323	217.3	402,846
Kuwait .....	121,253	2,471,773	134.8	2,593,026
Lebanon .....	1,139,884	1,849,302	1,837.0	2,989,186
Mauritania .....	1,335	4,727	1.5	6,062
Syria .....	20,226	746,242	84.7	766,468
Yemen .....		254,667	33.8	254,667
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>28,528,666</b>	<b>57,473,525</b>	<b>20,917.5</b>	<b>86,002,191</b>