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ICRC/M-E. Hippenmeyer

In Peru, families whose main bread-winners are imprisoned or have disappeared in connection with the ongoing unrest turn to the ICRC. They receive material assistance and moral support to help them recover from the immediate shock of a family emergency. The ICRC also offers to exchange Red Cross messages between detainees and their close relatives and facilitates family visits.

The Americas

ICRC delegations or missions:

Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Peru

ICRC regional delegations:

Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Guatemala City, Washington

Staff

ICRC expatriates¹ : 74

National Societies¹ : 6

Local employees² : 176

Total expenditure

Sfr 21,095,282

Expenditure breakdown

	Sfr
Protection/tracing:	12,264,618
Relief:	456,048
Medical assistance:	2,654,310
Cooperation with National Societies:	456,942
Dissemination:	1,755,606
Operational support:	2,237,743
Overheads:	1,270,015



⊕ ICRC regional delegation ⊕ ICRC delegation, mission or other presence

ICRC / AR 12.95

THE AMERICAS

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1995.

The worsening violence in Colombia was one of the main ICRC concerns in the Americas in 1995. According to some sources, up to 40,000 violent deaths were recorded during the year, and there was no end in sight to the severe problems caused by the political violence, the drug trade and common and organized crime, including thousands of abductions and disappearances. In addition to the widespread tension resulting from these problems, 1995 saw a proliferation of paramilitary groups in many regions of the country. The ICRC maintained its dialogue with the government and the armed opposition, developed its presence in the most affected areas and initiated contacts with members of these paramilitary groups. During the year its operation in Colombia became the largest in the Americas.

The ICRC's swift response when the international conflict between Ecuador and Peru broke out in January highlighted the importance of operational preparedness and dissemination work. The delegations in Lima and Brasilia stood ready to take action, and ICRC delegates were sent in a matter of days to Quito and to the disputed border region. But operational preparedness in itself was not sufficient: knowledge of the institution's role in such situations among the political and military leaders of the two countries was essential in paving the way for ICRC action. The delegation in Lima and the mission set up in Quito could thus work in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, which are applicable in international conflicts. This enabled the ICRC to visit prisoners of war and interned civilians, arrange for their repatriation and play an important role in surveying needs among civilians and in acting as a neutral intermediary between the parties.

The ICRC proposed its services on two other occasions in 1995. In April, when tension rose between the trade union movement and the government in Bolivia, the ICRC's offer was immediately accepted, and delegates were visiting trade unionists in detention within days. Later in the year another offer of services was made to the Guatemalan government, this time aimed at conducting activities to protect people affected by the internal violence in that country. Although these activities did not begin in 1995, the offer did serve as a basis for initiating dissemination efforts in the north, and prospects for a development of operational activities looked favourable by the end of the year.

Spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law and of the ICRC's role and tasks remained one of the cornerstones of the work done by the regional delegations in Brasilia, Buenos Aires and Guatemala City. Special regional seminars were held for government representatives on the protection of civilians in situations of violence (see the report on Buenos Aires, below) and for high-level members of the military on dissemination of humanitarian law among the armed forces (see the report on Guatemala City, below), with attendance from nearly all the countries of the Americas. ICRC delegates



+ ICRC delegation
 + ICRC sub-delegation
 + ICRC presence

ICRC / AR 12.95

COLOMBIA

The year saw no improvement in the security situation in Colombia. The rate of violent deaths nationwide, already the highest in the world, rose still further to about 40,000 per year, and the number of abductions remained high. As in the past, much of the killing and kidnapping was attributable to crime, to a long history and entrenched culture of violence, and to the drug trade. The political violence too worsened.

The end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995 brought hope for peace negotiations between the government and the armed opposition. On numerous occasions the ICRC offered its services as a neutral and impartial intermediary in order to facilitate the peace process. But developments in 1995, including the resignation of the Commissioner for Peace in August, forced the preparatory talks into a deadlock, and the negotiations never got off the ground. By year's end there was little hope of talks taking place in the immediate future.

Both sides contributed to the escalation in political violence. Numerous massacres took place in the Urabá region, and elsewhere tension mounted and many paramilitary groups emerged. Attacks by the armed opposition became more frequent in mid-year.

The spate of massacres in the Urabá region was due to clashes over rights to fertile land and also partly to in-fighting among political groups vying for control of trade unions active in the area's banana plantations, which resulted in hundreds of deaths. All the victims of these massacres were civilians. The ICRC responded by strengthening its presence in Urabá. In the second half of the year it opened a sub-delegation in Barranquilla and another in Medellín, the capital of the department of Antioquia, one of the most affected regions.

The government, increasingly beleaguered by political scandals, did not stop the proliferation of paramilitary groups in the north, the Magdalena Medio region and the western Amazon plains. These groups often attacked people suspected of being members or supporters of the armed opposition. Again,

IN 1995 THE ICRC:

- visited 2,009 detainees, including 886 for the first time, in 348 places of detention;
- helped 1,818 people whose lives were in serious danger by paying for their transport to safer areas;
- held some 410 dissemination sessions, reaching over 21,000 people.

most of the victims were civilians. The delegation initiated contacts with representatives of these paramilitary groups.

Extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances and hostage-taking, all of which are violations of humanitarian law, remained commonplace throughout the country, as did the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

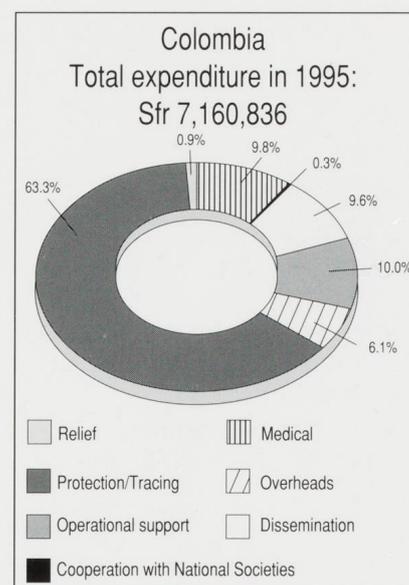
After an extensive national debate on humanitarian law, the Colombian government, Congress and courts confirmed the country's accession to Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions in 1995. The accession officially took place on 14 August 1995, when the relevant instruments were sent to the Swiss government, and was to take effect six months later, on 14 February 1996.

The worsening violence in the country makes it impossible to measure the practical impact of Colombia's adherence to Protocol II; but its acceptance in principle by the government and the armed opposition groups, together with other measures taken in 1994 to improve awareness of human rights and other issues, did much to spread knowledge of the way in which the ICRC functions and to facilitate the delegation's work in the country.

The delegation was thus able to maintain regular contact with the civilian and military authorities and with the armed opposition to draw attention to violations of humanitarian law committed by their units or combatants and to propose ways of preventing their recurrence. Reports containing observations about respect for the provisions of humanitarian law and recommendations for improving the situation were handed over to the highest government authorities and the armed opposition in October. Delegates also brought these matters up with representatives of the various parties, including brigade commanders, prison directors and representatives of the armed opposition at the local level.

Protection of civilians

With expatriate staff at its delegation, sub-delegations and field offices in Bogotá, Apartadó, Bucaramanga, Barranquilla (since August), Medellín (since November), Montería (until October), Popayán, Saravena and Villavicencio, the ICRC closely followed the situation in the most affected areas of the country. When reports of abuses or tension reached the delegation the ICRC responded by sending out field missions, and delegates recorded allegations of incidents involving violations of humanitarian law committed by army troops, members of the armed opposition or paramilitary forces. To protect the victims and to ensure confidentiality, the delegation applied very strict criteria in collecting and making use of such information, which was conveyed to the authorities or the opposition only with the consent of the civilians reporting the



allegations. Cases concerning a total of 353 civilians were handled in 1995; these related to incidents which took place during the year. The collection of data relating to events in 1995 did not stop at the end of the year, but continued into 1996. The ICRC was authorized to pass on detailed information concerning the cases of 385 civilians to the forces or groups allegedly responsible for violations; some of these cases related to incidents that had occurred in 1994.

When civilians were the target of serious threats by one of the parties to the conflict the ICRC offered to pay for their transport to safer areas.

Activities for detainees and other people deprived of their freedom

The ICRC had systematic access to people held for security reasons. Delegates carried out 742 visits to 348 places of detention, including facilities under the authority of the Ministry of Justice, the police, the army and the Administrative Department of Security (DAS). During these visits the ICRC provided clothing, toiletries, cleaning materials and recreational items for detainees, along with medicines and other medical supplies.

The ICRC's continuous monitoring of the arrest notification system confirmed that the prison system was not responsible for the numerous disappearances in the country; the delegation thus focused its protection activities on the treatment of people prior to their transfer to permanent places of detention in an effort to stop such disappearances. The delegation's visits to prisoners also enabled it to compile reports on conditions of detention.

The delegation covered the cost of transport to enable family members to visit their relatives in prison and paid for tickets home for prisoners after their release. A total of 2,540 transport vouchers were issued.

As in the past, the delegation stood ready to assist in the release of people captured or kidnapped by the armed opposition. In 1995, ICRC delegates assisted in the release of 11 people.

Tracing activities

Most of the ICRC's tracing activities concentrated on work for detainees and the protection of civilians. The ICRC kept track of all inmates visited by delegates, checked on the arrest notification system set up by the authorities and handled information regarding people who had disappeared and other victims of alleged violations of humanitarian law. A total of 68 tracing cases were opened and 56 were closed. At the end of the year there were 104 cases still pending.

Medical activities

The delegation paid for the medical treatment of 63 people injured as a result of the political violence. It also distributed medical supplies to health posts and other facilities in the field when their stocks were depleted owing to armed clashes.

Relief activities

During field missions delegates provided assistance to over 1,700 civilians affected by the political violence. This included clothing, mattresses, kitchen utensils and food.

Dissemination

The delegation worked in close cooperation with the Colombian Red Cross Society to carry out numerous dissemination programmes for audiences such as the military, the police, prison guards, civilian authorities, clergymen, health workers and members of the National Society.

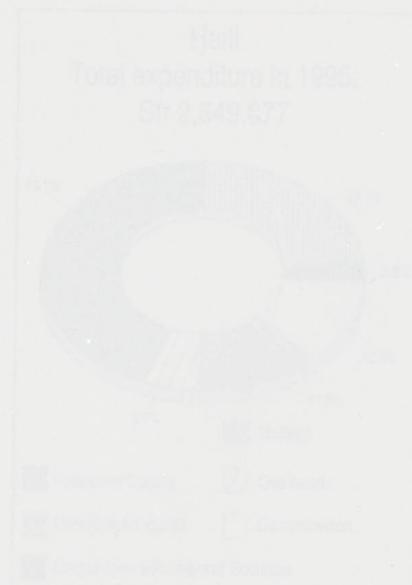
The ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross participated in the organization of several events, including, in February, a nation-wide International Humanitarian Law Week which brought together, for the first time, former members of guerrilla groups and military personnel. The ICRC and the National Society also signed dissemination agreements with the Ministry of Defence, which is responsible for the National Police, and the DAS. Dozens of seminars and workshops were conducted with units run by the Ministry and the DAS and their training facilities in the field.

In rural areas affected by the violence, the ICRC itself held hundreds of dissemination sessions, several of which were aimed at reaching members of the armed opposition.

In July the delegation in Bogotá began issuing a monthly brochure entitled *ICRC Latin America Bulletin*, intended for the media, the public and government representatives throughout the continent.

ECUADOR-PERU BORDER CONFLICT

When fighting erupted in late January between the armed forces of Ecuador and Peru the ICRC immediately took action to ensure that it was able to work on both sides. In Peru, where the institution already had an operational delegation, contacts were maintained with government officials, and the delegation worked with local chapters of the Peruvian Red Cross to survey possible needs for humanitarian assistance in the border region. As for



operations in Ecuador, the ICRC's regional delegate based in Brasilia arrived in Quito on 28 January and immediately initiated a dialogue with the government authorities. This led to the establishment of an ICRC mission in the Ecuadorean capital. Delegates worked closely with the Ecuadorean Red Cross to survey needs in the border area and helped the National Society carry out an assistance programme for people affected by the fighting, including displaced persons.

Invoking humanitarian law

At the end of January, in mid-March and again in June the ICRC sent memoranda to the governments of Ecuador and Peru. The first, issued on 30 January, reminded them of their obligation to observe the fundamental standards of humanitarian law and explained ICRC procedures for visits to prisoners of war and other individuals deprived of their freedom. Two memoranda issued in mid-March addressed respectively the question of landmines (which were responsible for a large number of casualties during the fighting and seriously affected the lives of civilians in the border region) and the ICRC's concerns about missing people, mortal remains and the fate of civilians and others protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention. By March the military situation had calmed down, but there were still some prisoners of war and civilian internees held by either side. On 8 June the ICRC issued another memorandum, this time specifically referring to the obligation of the parties to release prisoners of war without delay after the hostilities ended.

Final memoranda were submitted to the highest authorities of the two countries in August. These addressed remaining issues of humanitarian concern, including problems related to missing people, mortal remains and residual landmines in the border area.

Visits to people deprived of their freedom

During the first eight months of the year the ICRC visited 52 Ecuadoreans held in Peru and 29 Peruvians in captivity in Ecuador, including respectively six and nine prisoners of war and dozens of interned civilians on both sides. The ICRC took part in the repatriation of a total of nine Ecuadoreans and 18 Peruvians.

HAITI

The international forces which had arrived in the country in September 1994 remained stationed there throughout 1995. Command of these forces passed from the United States military to the United Nations in April. In addition, a

large number of international advisers assisted in restructuring almost all the government services. Indeed, since the 1994 intervention and the subsequent restoration of the democratically elected Presidency had put an end to three years of military rule, a great deal of reorganization was required. This was true for the police and prison service, as thousands of new prison guards and policemen were recruited and trained, or retrained, during the year.

Activities for detainees

The ICRC's work centred around visits to places of detention, where conditions remained extremely precarious. Throughout the year the ICRC monitored the situation in the National Penitentiary, which housed up to 970 inmates (including up to 400 in a single hall), and in other jails and prisons throughout the country. It advised the new authorities on how to ensure acceptable conditions of detention, while laying considerable emphasis on the fact that it was up to the Haitian authorities to provide for the requirements of prisoners. At the end of the year conditions at the National Penitentiary and the National Fort (where minors and women were incarcerated) deteriorated owing to vitamin deficiencies, resulting in the death of a number of prisoners. The ICRC transferred medical staff from Bogotá to Port-au-Prince to help the authorities restore a proper diet for the inmates and sent letters to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice to draw attention to this problem.

A summary report on detention conditions in Haitian prisons was submitted to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice in October.

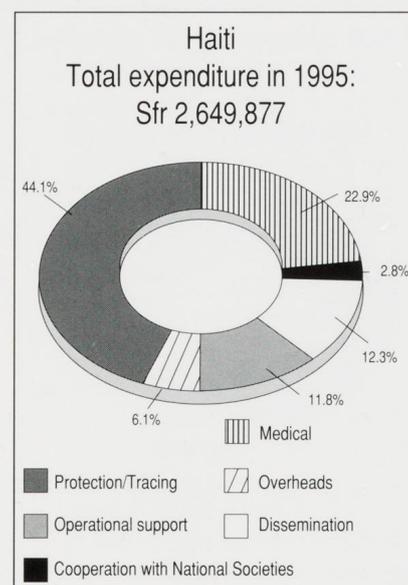
At the beginning of the year 25 people were being detained in connection with the military intervention at the Joint Detention Facility run by the United States forces. The ICRC followed their cases individually throughout the year. In March they were handed over to the Haitian authorities. At the end of 1995 seven of them were still being held by the country's authorities.

In September and October, respectively, the ICRC submitted to the United States authorities in Port-au-Prince and in Washington a summary report on its visits to people detained by the United States military in Haiti.

To help ensure a rapid improvement in conditions of detention, the ICRC provided medical and sanitation assistance, in particular to the National Penitentiary, where it built an infirmary and restored the water supply and sewage systems.

Dissemination

Following the exiled President's return to the country, the ICRC had excellent opportunities to spread knowledge of the humanitarian principles, the aim being to prevent violations of humanitarian law. It organized dissemination



sessions for all members of the new police force and prison service, United Nations troops stationed in Haiti and detainees.

Cooperation with the National Society

In 1995 the ICRC set about helping to improve the structure and strengthen the credibility of the Haitian National Red Cross Society, a goal which had been unrealistic in previous years owing to the political climate and the problems resulting from the internal violence. Together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC thus initiated a series of activities aimed at strengthening the National Society's operational capacity, by developing its membership, backing fund-raising campaigns and improving its internal structures.

MEXICO

In February the government's military offensive in Chiapas led to the arrest of dozens of people suspected of being EZLN* members and brought about a change on the political and military scene. The army retook large areas of Chiapas and the government issued arrest warrants for the leaders of the EZLN. The delegation moved its medical team from Guadalupe Tepeyac to San José del Río in March, while maintaining another team in San Miguel. The main ICRC mission remained in San Cristóbal de las Casas. By mid-March, the tension had eased considerably. The Congress of the Union passed a law for dialogue and reconciliation, which suspended the effect of the warrants and served as a basis for future talks.

As the situation calmed down and other organizations were able to work in Chiapas, in mid-year the ICRC progressively handed over its assistance programmes, including medical and relief programmes for displaced people and others affected by the events, to the Mexican Red Cross. The ICRC continued to be called upon, in its capacity as a neutral and impartial intermediary, to provide transport and ensure the safety of EZLN representatives when they met government officials for peace talks. The delegation provided such transport 11 times in 1995.

From 1 to 4 August the ICRC President, accompanied by the Delegate General for the Americas, was in Mexico, where he held talks with the highest authorities, including the President of the Republic, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Health, and the Vice-Minister of the Interior.

* EZLN: Zapatista National Liberation Army

Since there was no longer a need for a specific ICRC presence in Chiapas, in mid-year the ICRC decided to reduce the number of its staff in the country from seven to three, and later to one delegate, based in the capital. As from October its operation in Mexico was administered from the Guatemala City regional delegation.

Activities for detainees

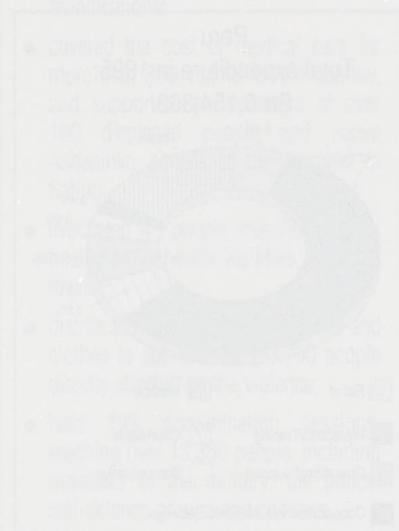
As soon as tension rose in early 1995 and the government began arresting people accused of collaborating with the EZLN, the ICRC again offered its services to the Mexican authorities. It issued a memorandum on 15 February requesting authorization to visit people held in connection with the events. The Delegate General for the Americas travelled to Mexico in late February for talks with representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Interior and Defence. The discussions focused, among other things, on ICRC visits to detainees in Mexico.

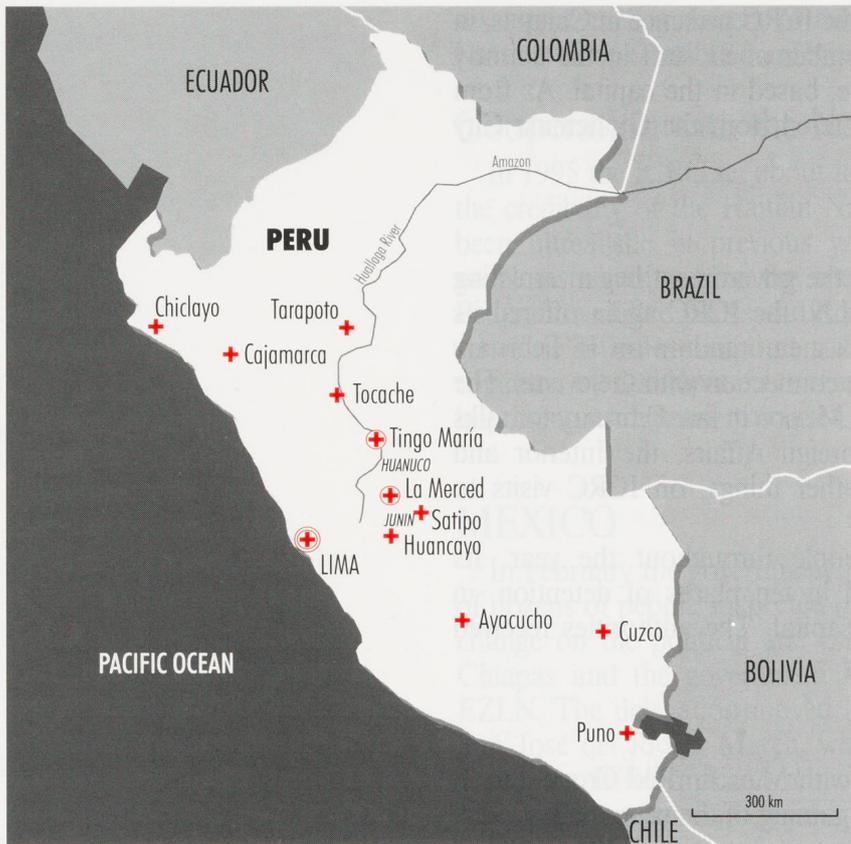
The ICRC conducted visits to these people throughout the year. Its delegates saw a total of 23 individuals held in ten places of detention, in Puebla, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Veracruz and the capital. The authorities received ICRC reports on these visits in March and July.

Medical and relief activities

ICRC medical staff were working together with Mexican Red Cross staff in San Miguel and Guadalupe Tepeyac at the beginning of the year and provided medical services, including vaccinations and consultations, to thousands of people in remote areas. When tension increased in February the ICRC temporarily suspended its medical and relief activities, but quickly resumed them to survey needs among displaced people.

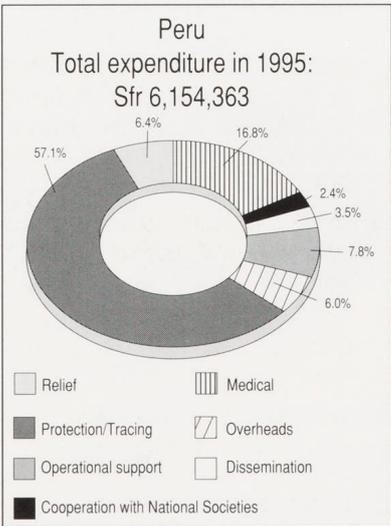
The ICRC and the Mexican Red Cross provided food, soap, jerricans, tortilla presses, blankets and kitchen sets for displaced people in Chiapas and others affected by the situation. In early 1995 up to 14,000 people were receiving such assistance. By July all medical and relief activities had been handed over to the National Society.





⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation ⊕ ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.95



...the year.

Visiting people deprived of their freedom as a result of the internal conflict clearly became the main thrust of the ICRC's work in the country. Visits were conducted by expatriates based at the delegation in Lima or by those based in Tingo María and La Merced. In addition, the delegation continued to monitor respect for judicial guarantees, and it closely followed the situation of members of the medical profession accused of cooperating with the armed opposition because they treated wounded people.

Activities for detainees

One of the ICRC's principal concerns as regards the protection of prisoners was the extreme severity of detention conditions. By late 1995 nearly half of the

PERU

For information on the ICRC's activities concerning the international conflict between Ecuador and Peru, please see page 103.

In 1995 the internal violence that had brought the country to crisis point a few years earlier abated even further, as the government continued to make progress in its struggle against armed opposition groups. By the end of the year over 5,000 people were being held in detention in connection with the internal conflict. The only regions which remained seriously affected by the violence were the Huallaga valley and part of the Ucayali region, near Tingo María, and certain areas of the central Selva region, where armed groups and the military were still active.

Given the limited scope of the fighting in comparison with past years, the ICRC restructured its presence, concentrating expatriate staff in the regions concerned (namely at the Tingo María and La Merced sub-delegations) and at the delegation in Lima. At the end of the year the ICRC maintained small local offices in various

people held in connection with the internal conflict were in high-security prison sections. These were completely isolated from other sections and conditions there were particularly harsh. Since the vast majority of security prisoners were being held in major cities up to four or five days' return journey from their places of origin, and because they were mainly from low-income or impoverished backgrounds, their families often could not afford the trip. The ICRC therefore reimbursed travel expenses of family members visiting detained relatives.

As regards the treatment of prisoners and conditions of detention, the delegation regularly submitted written reports and made oral recommendations to the authorities with a view to improving these conditions.

In June the delegation submitted three summary reports, respectively to the Ministry of Justice (representing the Presidency of the Republic), the Ministry of the Interior and the armed forces. These reports covered ICRC activities conducted in 1994 to protect prisoners. The report to the armed forces also dealt with the protection of civilians.

Delegates carried out an average of 75 visits per month to places of detention run by the Ministries of Justice, the Interior and Defence. During these visits they registered prisoners seen for the first time, including those under interrogation, and provided recreational and educational equipment, personal hygiene items, blankets and medical supplies, as needed. At the end of the year the ICRC was visiting approximately 5,000 prisoners in Peru.

Activities for the civilian population

The regular presence of ICRC expatriate staff in the two main areas affected by the internal conflict made it possible to collect information on alleged violations of humanitarian law. This information was then confidentially transmitted to the competent military or civilian authorities in order to help prevent a recurrence of such incidents.

The ICRC also provided material assistance to civilian victims of the violence, including widows, orphans, people whose property had been destroyed and displaced persons.

Tracing activities

The ICRC's principal tracing activities were to keep track of the whereabouts of prisoners, to maintain contact between inmates and their families and, when necessary, to issue travel vouchers for family visits. A small number of cases involving missing people were also handled in 1995. The ICRC moreover assisted in restoring ties between family members who had been separated for years as a result of the internal conflict in the central Selva region.

IN 1995 THE ICRC:

- visited 4,905 prisoners, 1,921 of them for the first time, in 1,024 visits to 187 places of detention;
- assisted in organizing 73 family reunifications;
- covered the cost of medical care for more than 360 victims of the conflict, and supported the treatment of over 100 displaced people and native Ashaninka people at the hospital in Satipo;
- evacuated 43 people requiring special treatment to health facilities in major towns;
- distributed food, cooking utensils and clothes to approximately 3,700 people directly affected by the violence;
- held 199 dissemination sessions, reaching over 13,350 people, including members of the military, the police, self-defence groups and civilians.

Medical activities

The delegation paid for the treatment of people injured in incidents related to the internal conflict and hospitalized in medical facilities run by the Ministry of Health. It provided medical supplies to hospitals and health posts in areas affected by the fighting, and evacuated people requiring specialized treatment to major towns and cities. The delegation supplied orthopaedic appliances for seven people who had lost limbs in incidents related to the internal conflict. In addition, ICRC medical staff took part in visits to places of detention.

Dissemination

A number of dissemination sessions were held each month for the military, the police and the general population, both in regions still affected by the fighting and at various military academies, universities and schools in the capital and the country's main cities.

Cooperation with the National Society

The restructuring of the Peruvian Red Cross continued in 1995, with assistance from the ICRC and the Federation. An ICRC delegate seconded by the Norwegian Red Cross was assigned the task of developing cooperation with the National Society. As part of the restructuring process the Society adopted new statutes, which at the end of 1995 were still to be approved by the government. At year's end much remained to be done for the Peruvian Red Cross to fulfil its role as an operational National Society.

BRASILIA

Regional delegation

(Brazil, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela)

The ICRC regional delegation was instrumental in meeting needs for humanitarian assistance and ensuring the necessary follow-up after the border dispute between Ecuador and Peru broke out in January (*for information on the ICRC's activities concerning the international conflict between Ecuador and Peru, please see page 103*).

In addition, the ICRC maintained its efforts to spread knowledge of humanitarian law, notably among the military and the police and in academic circles in Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela, and continued to encourage the Venezuelan government to accede to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

BRAZIL

The ICRC held dissemination sessions for 2,150 soldiers and officers of units undergoing military training in preparation for United Nations peace-keeping missions in Angola and for students at military training centres and academies, including the ECEME (the army's central military academy), the naval war school and air force academies. A regular training programme for military police cadets of the state of Rio de Janeiro commenced in July.

Dissemination of humanitarian law for university staff and students included events held at the University of São Paulo (including the law faculty), the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, the Paulista University in São Paulo, the University of Brasilia and San Francisco University in São Paulo. Some courses and seminars were organized for other audiences, including a meeting of jurists from all over the Americas, government officials (such as the members of the Federal Council on Crime and Penitentiary Policy, a body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice), state prosecutors and ministers.

ECUADOR

For an account of the ICRC's activities concerning the international conflict between Ecuador and Peru, please see page 103).

In May the ICRC visited seven Colombian nationals who were detained for alleged involvement in attacks committed in Ecuador by the FARC* in December 1993. A summary report on this visit was submitted to the Ecuadorean authorities in August.

Throughout the year, the Ecuadorean Red Cross conducted dissemination and training sessions on humanitarian law for the country's armed forces, under a cooperation programme between the National Society and the ICRC. All told, some 3,600 people took part in these sessions.

VENEZUELA

The 15th Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross took place in Caracas from 30 January to 2 February and coincided with the celebration of the centenary of the Venezuelan Red Cross. The Conference was attended by National Society representatives from throughout the Americas and by the highest officials of the Federation and the ICRC. The latter was represented by its President, Vice-President and Delegate General for the Americas. The Conference appealed to the governments of Ecuador and Peru to respect the

* FARC: Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces

provisions of humanitarian law and to settle their border dispute in a peaceful manner.

During his stay in Caracas the ICRC President held talks with the Ministers of Foreign Relations and Defence and discussed a variety of issues, including Venezuela's accession to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

The regional delegate later had follow-up meetings on these subjects with the joint chiefs of staff and with representatives of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Relations, and took part in dissemination sessions at Santa María University, the military academy and the officers' training school in Caracas.

BUENOS AIRES

Regional delegation

(Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay)

The regional delegation and the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, organized an inter-American seminar on the protection of people in situations of violence, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, from 28 to 30 June. Some 50 government representatives from all the Spanish-speaking countries of the continent, Belize, Brazil and Spain attended, along with representatives of the National Societies of Bolivia, Colombia and Spain.

The final resolution adopted by the seminar invited governments to strengthen humanitarian law by acceding to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention and other instruments, and to include in their national legislation specific provisions to prevent or stop violations of humanitarian law. The ICRC was represented at the seminar by the Delegate General for the Americas and the head of its legal division.

The regional delegation participated in joint military exercises conducted in August by the armed forces of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, the United States and Uruguay. The exercises, which simulated peace-keeping operations, were based on the experiences of units sent on United Nations missions by these countries.

The ICRC took part in the work of interministerial committees established in all the countries of the region, including various working sessions of the Committee set up in Argentina and the inaugural meeting of the Committee established in Chile.

Throughout the year the regional delegation was involved in dissemination activities for the armed forces in all the countries covered, including for troops sent by Argentina and Uruguay on United Nations peace-keeping missions.

Sessions were also held for students and staff at various universities in Chile, the Catholic Universities in Montevideo and Asunción, the University of the Saviour and the University of Buenos Aires, and for diplomats at the Argentine Council for International Relations in Buenos Aires.

BOLIVIA

In April the worsening social situation and the declaration of a state of siege resulted in the detention of a number of trade unionists. The ICRC made an offer of services on 26 April, requesting access to these detainees. Authorization was immediately granted, and an ICRC team visited 162 of them at three places of detention in the period between 29 April and 1 May. The detainees were able to send Red Cross messages to their families. A report on these visits was submitted to the authorities in mid-May.

CHILE

In January delegates visited 115 security detainees at the main penitentiaries in Chile, including 21 who were seen for the first time. A summary report on these visits was handed over to the Chilean authorities in March. During another visit conducted on 16 November, delegates went to the two main places of detention in Santiago, but did not register any new detainees.

On 10 November the ICRC concluded a cooperation agreement with the government of Chile, specifying that the government's annual contribution would cover a fixed proportion of the cost of ICRC operations, in addition to Chile's regular support for the ICRC's headquarters budget.

GUATEMALA CITY

Regional delegation

(Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico [from September], Nicaragua, Panama and other countries in the Caribbean)

From 25 to 29 September the ICRC delegation in Guatemala City held a seminar on the dissemination of humanitarian law for the military and security forces of the entire Latin American region. Representatives of 19 countries attended (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico [as an observer], Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela). This was the third seminar of this kind organized by the ICRC, after events held

in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in 1992 and Punta del Este, Uruguay, in 1993. The seminar included, for the first time, senior officers responsible for training and other high-ranking officials from the entire continent. It also addressed themes such as the ICRC's campaign against the use of landmines, United Nations peace-keeping operations and ways to prevent war crimes.

The regional delegation called on the governments of Nicaragua, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago to ratify both Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, and those of Cuba and Mexico to ratify Protocol II. It also helped organize a number of meetings and seminars for members of governments and National Societies of the region. For example, on 6 and 7 April the ICRC held the first regional meeting of dissemination directors from the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean and Central America, and a second meeting was held in Havana, Cuba, on 16 and 17 October. At the end of October a similar meeting was held for English-speaking countries in the Caribbean. It addressed the topics of dissemination, communication and tracing, and was organized in Saint Lucia in cooperation with the country's National Society.

The ICRC took part in events organized by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, based in San José, Costa Rica. These included seminars for directors of military academies and for directors and human rights instructors of police academies of Central America, held respectively in San Salvador, El Salvador, and Gamboa, Panama, as well as the 13th interdisciplinary course on human rights, which took place at the Institute's headquarters.

Among the delegation's regular dissemination activities were a number of sessions or seminars for the military and/or police forces (in Costa Rica, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Saint Lucia) and for university students, the press, the public and members of National Societies in those and other countries. The delegation launched dissemination activities in Jamaica. During the year the ICRC worked closely with the Dominican Red Cross to develop its dissemination services and organized a five-day seminar in November for 30 high-ranking members of the country's military.

CUBA

The regional delegation maintained contacts with the Cuban government, discussing Cuba's possible ratification of Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions, the potential need for ICRC assistance in enabling Cuban nationals at the United States naval base in Guantanamo Bay to communicate with their families in Cuba, and the possibility of ICRC visits to security detainees. The delegation also provided support for the centre for the dissemination of international humanitarian law in Havana, run jointly by the

ICRC, the Cuban Red Cross and the Cuban armed forces, and took part in dissemination sessions for the Cuban military and others. Monthly courses for Cuban military personnel began at the centre in February.

Throughout 1995 the delegation worked closely with the Cuban Red Cross to develop its tracing and other services.

GRENADA

In mid-May the ICRC visited 17 prisoners at Richmond Hill, incarcerated since the United States military intervention of 1983.

GUATEMALA

On 3 March the President of Guatemala visited ICRC headquarters in Geneva, where he held talks with the President of the ICRC and other members of the Committee (the ICRC's governing body). They discussed the possibility of ICRC operations in Guatemala, where the situation remained tense. Throughout 1995 the regional delegation maintained contacts with senior government representatives, including the President of the Republic, and other officials to express the ICRC's readiness to provide for the protection of civilians and detainees affected by the internal violence. In June a formal offer of services was made to the Ministry of the Interior.

Beginning in October, the ICRC conducted dissemination sessions for members of the Guatemalan military in the north of the country, including Quiché. In all, about 3,000 soldiers and 350 officers attended 44 sessions in the last two months of the year.

HONDURAS

On 16 February the Honduran government officially deposited instruments of ratification for the two Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions. The ratification took effect six months later, on 16 August.

PANAMA

In September an ICRC delegate visited seven people held in two places of detention in Panama as a result of the United States military intervention of 1989.

Panama ratified the Additional Protocols; the relevant instruments were deposited with the Swiss government on 18 September, and the ratification was to take effect six months later, on 18 March 1996.

WASHINGTON

Regional delegation (Canada, United States)

The regional delegation in Washington opened in June. Its main aims are to maintain and strengthen relations with the governments and National Societies of Canada and the United States and to disseminate humanitarian law and information on the ICRC and the Movement. During the second half of the year it developed contacts between the ICRC and various organizations in North America, including the Organization of American States and the World Bank (headquartered in Washington) and numerous non-governmental organizations.

CUBA

PANAMA

