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Soup kitchens and tanks of drinking water were set up in Gudermes and other towns in Chechnya (Russian Federation) to help the most vulnerable of the displaced people. In 1996 some 400,000 people affected by the conflict in Chechnya received assistance from the ICRC.



## **Eastern Europe**

### **ICRC regional delegations:**

Kyiv  
Moscow

## **The Caucasus**

### **ICRC delegations:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

## **Central Asia**

### **ICRC delegation:**

Tajikistan

### **ICRC regional delegation:**

Tashkent

## **Staff**

ICRC expatriates<sup>1</sup> : 123

National Societies<sup>1</sup> : 36

Local employees<sup>2</sup> : 622

## **Total expenditure**

Sfr 79,151,564

## **Expenditure breakdown**

**Sfr**

Protection/tracing: 15,776,994

Relief: 36,843,128

Health activities: 12,274,756

Cooperation with

National Societies: 849,529

Dissemination/promotion: 5,420,508

Operational support: 3,840,327

Overheads: 4,146,322



⊕ ICRC regional delegation

⊕ ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12.96

# ***EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA***

<sup>1</sup> Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

<sup>2</sup> Under ICRC contract, as at December 1996.



*In retrospect, the year was overshadowed by the cold-blooded murder in December of six delegates working at the ICRC's Novye Atagi field hospital near Grozny, in the Republic of Chechnya. They were from Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Spain. Their deaths did not occur in the heat of battle, but were the result of a deliberate criminal act. This tragedy forced the ICRC to scale down its activities for the victims of that conflict.*

*The all-out military confrontation in the northern Caucasus and Tajikistan left its mark on 1996. Although active hostilities in Chechnya ceased at the end of August, the underlying causes were not settled. In other places, such as the Prigorodny district (Ingushetia), Abkhazia and Nagorny Karabakh, cease-fire agreements held but little progress was made towards lasting political settlements. In this "no peace, no war" situation, humanitarian problems remained unsolved and the resumption of hostilities cannot be ruled out.*

*The difficult transition from planned to market economies continued to have a negative impact on most countries in the region, leading to a dramatic decline in living standards. Vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, the disabled and detainees suffered most from the widespread dismantling of social services. The widening gap between the few people making huge profits and the poverty-stricken majority of the population, particularly where it is accentuated by communal tensions, could at any moment lead to violence.*

*In the northern Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, the ICRC endeavoured to protect the civilian population in conflict zones from various ills, ranging from actual threats to their physical integrity to outright discrimination. In Chechnya and Tajikistan, the utter disregard for humanitarian rules for the conduct of hostilities posed the greatest threat.*

*In Armenia and Georgia, thanks to the support of the highest authorities, the ICRC was allowed into all places of detention and conducted visits to security detainees in accordance with customary ICRC procedures. The three parties involved in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict released 110 prisoners; however, at the end of the year a number of people were still held as a result of the conflict. The Tajik authorities did not authorize the ICRC to visit, in accordance with its customary procedures, people detained as a result of the civil war; nonetheless, the ICRC launched a nutritional programme in Tajik prisons to save the lives of severely malnourished prisoners. In the northern Caucasus, access to detainees held in connection with the Chechen conflict remained extremely limited, mainly because of the lack of cooperation by the authorities on both sides.*

*The ICRC was deeply concerned about the fate of people unaccounted for as a result of conflict. While the Red Cross message network remained an effective way of restoring contact between people separated by hostilities, all*



too often official tracing commissions set up by the parties concerned achieved only meagre results.

To assist the war-wounded, the ICRC focused on replenishing the supplies of the medical facilities caring for them. In Chechnya, it also worked to rehabilitate hospitals destroyed by the fighting, and in September it set up its own independent field hospital in Noye Atagi.

The production of artificial limbs for war amputees continued in the prosthetic/orthotic workshops in Baku, Tbilisi and Gagra (Abkhazia). The ICRC carried on its pilot project, begun in 1995, for the treatment of tuberculosis in the Baku prison hospital and prepared to launch similar projects in Armenia and Georgia.

Water and sanitation activities were of particular importance in Nagorny Karabakh and Chechnya, where the ICRC was once again running a major operation to maintain water supplies for Grozny.

Large-scale relief programmes were conducted with the active cooperation of participating and operating National Societies in the northern and southern Caucasus and in Tajikistan, despite considerable logistical difficulties in mountainous terrain. Community kitchens prepared hot meals for thousands of elderly people, and distributions of food and other assistance, including building material, benefited tens of thousands of people.

To facilitate the implementation of international humanitarian law at national level, the ICRC continued to build up its legal advisory services for governments. In 1996 national seminars took place in Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Chisinau and Kyiv, completing the round of seminars organized for the 15 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Substantial efforts went into making political, military, educational and academic circles aware of humanitarian rules and principles and tailor-made approaches for each target audience were developed further. In the Russian Federation, the introduction of international humanitarian law into the Federal university curriculum was undoubtedly a breakthrough. Teaching international humanitarian law to the armed forces remained a key activity, including the organization of seminars and field exercises at regional and national levels.

As usual, cooperation with National Societies mostly took the form of support and training in spreading knowledge of humanitarian law and restoring family links. In five autonomous republics in the northern Caucasus, the ICRC supported local committees of the Russian Red Cross in their social and medical community work, with a view to furthering the long-term structural development and independence of the Red Cross.

As the year drew to a close, the tragedy of Noye Atagi lent new urgency to the search for appropriate responses to the type of risks increasingly faced by humanitarian workers in conflict situations.



# Eastern Europe

## KYIV

### Regional delegation

(Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)

After more than a year of negotiations had enabled the ICRC to sign a headquarters agreement with the Ukrainian government on 5 December 1995, the Kyiv regional delegation was opened in January 1996. The delegation maintained contact with the authorities in the region with a view to promoting international humanitarian law and familiarizing them with ICRC activities, and offered the assistance of the ICRC's specialized Advisory Service in incorporating that law into national legislation. In Latvia and Lithuania, national working groups for the implementation of international humanitarian law were in progress, while Moldova set up the Moldova National Committee on Consultation and Coordination of Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in September 1996. In all three countries, participants in these bodies included the government ministries concerned and the National Red Cross Society. The topic was also given priority on several occasions during high-level contacts, for example when the President of Ukraine visited ICRC headquarters in March, accompanied by three government ministers. They were received by the ICRC President and a number of the organization's senior officials.

### *presidential mission to the Baltic States*

In September the ICRC President travelled to the Baltic States, accompanied by the regional delegate. He met the President, the Minister of Defence and the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the President, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence of Latvia, and the President and the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Health of Lithuania. He was also received by the rectors of the universities of Riga, Tartu and Vilnius. His discussions with the authorities, besides being concerned with the implementation of international humanitarian law, centred on dissemination of that law among the armed forces and the ICRC's worldwide campaign against anti-personnel landmines. In meetings with the respective heads of the three Baltic National Societies, he reaffirmed the ICRC's support for their activities in dissemination and in the restoration of family links. The ICRC President's visit was given extensive media coverage.

Cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence began with a view to promoting knowledge of the law of war among the armed forces. A programme to that effect was drawn up for 1997. At the request of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, a working group was set up, chaired by the head of the Legal



## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



— kept up its efforts to obtain access to the four detainees of the “Ilascu group”, held since 1992 in Tiraspol, in the self-proclaimed “Dniestr Republic” in Moldova.



- arranged for a number of Ukrainians to be reunited with their families in Ukraine, from whom they had been separated as a result of the conflicts in the southern Caucasus and Afghanistan;
- transmitted Red Cross messages from three Ukrainian sailors held up in a port in Liberia to their families in Simferopol, who had been without news of them.



- gave a two-week seminar on cooperation and promotion of humanitarian law and principles for 25 local branches of the Red Cross Society of Ukraine in Yalta (Crimea), attended by some 40 participants;
- gave three one-week training seminars for over 150 participants from Kyiv town, Kyiv region and Uzhgorod local committees, as well as shorter events for senior staff;
- held a first summer seminar on Red Cross youth programmes in Minsk (Belarus) for 25 teachers and headmasters of schools involved in Red Cross activities;
- sponsored the publication of an internal Red Cross newsletter, of which

3,000 copies were printed at the end of the year, and supported the production of 30,000 calendars for 1997.



- organized seminars in Kyiv and Chisinau, in cooperation with the OSCE\*, on implementation of humanitarian law. The seminar in Kyiv was attended by 30 participants, including noted specialists from Great Britain and Denmark, high-ranking Ukrainian ministerial officials, and representatives of the Cabinet, the security services, parliament, the Academy of Sciences, the Ukrainian lawyers' association and the National Society. Some 40 participants, including the Minister of Justice, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the Moldova Red Cross, attended the meeting in Chisinau;
- organized an introductory presentation on humanitarian law for the Chiefs of Staff of the Ukrainian armed forces and a series of seminars for over 180 officers and senior lecturers of the main military academies of the Ministry of Defence in Kyiv, Odessa and Kharkov;
- gave similar presentations in Belarus for the Ministry of Defence;
- held presentations for the Army Chiefs of Staff, Ministry of Defence and military training centres in Latvia and Lithuania;
- gave presentations on international humanitarian law at Kyiv university for future legal advisers, military interpre-

ters and judges for military tribunals, with a view to having international humanitarian law incorporated into the university syllabus.

\* OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



*cooperation  
with the region's  
National Societies*

Service of the Ministry of Defence. The delegation also established contact and made plans for future cooperation with the armed forces of Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova. High-ranking officers of the armed forces of Belarus and Moldova took part in a seminar on the law of war organized by the ICRC Moscow delegation in September 1996.

The Kyiv delegation approached the Red Cross Societies in the region with a view to developing cooperation with them, mainly in dissemination and in restoring family links. To facilitate contact between National Society headquarters and the numerous local branches, and to enable the Red Cross Society of Ukraine to get in touch with a wider audience, the ICRC sponsored the publication of a newsletter. The first issue appeared at the end of the year. A first visit to the Society's Crimea branch in June gave the delegates the opportunity to organize a two-week training seminar for staff of over 20 local Red Cross branches. The seminar was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Justice and health officials, as well as external speakers. The local branches of the Ukrainian National Society remained the focal point of the delegation's cooperation/dissemination work for the rest of the year. Apart from organizing a number of seminars, cooperation also included the provision of training and office materials.

Under formal cooperation agreements with the tracing services of the National Societies of Belarus, Estonia and Moldova, the ICRC provided training, technical advice and essential material support, including the financing of salaries. Tracing services in the other countries also received financial support from it. Much of the work of National Society tracing services in the region was still related to the Second World War. The ICRC stepped up its assistance to the Red Cross Society of Ukraine, as its tracing service faced a sharply increased workload in handling tens of thousands of attestations delivered by the International Tracing Service in Arolsen to enquirers in Ukraine.



## MOSCOW

### Regional delegation

(Russian Federation, with specialized services for all countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia)

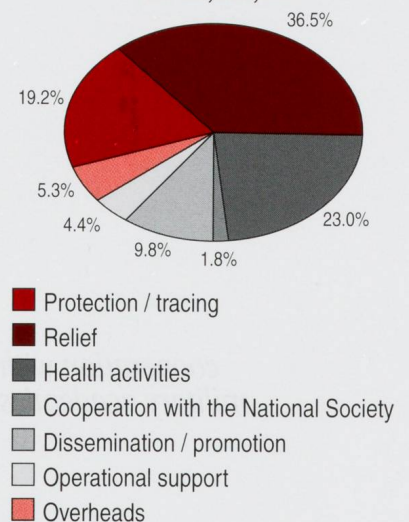
A part from actively supporting the ICRC operation in the northern Caucasus, the delegation maintained regular contacts with the Russian Federal authorities. On 3 September the ICRC President, accompanied by the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, met the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs who was on a visit to Bern. The meeting enabled the ICRC representatives to raise a number of points of special concern, such as the unresolved conflicts over the status of Nagorny Karabakh and Abkhazia and recent hostilities in Tajikistan and in the northern Caucasus. In October the Delegate General met the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the Russian Red Cross Society. In November the head of the Moscow delegation and the medical coordinator for the northern Caucasus met the newly appointed Minister of Health. The delegates expressed concern about the disregard for the integrity of medical facilities that had marked the Chechen conflict, and about the urgent need to provide at least basic health care for the population in that region. They also had a first meeting with two Deputy Chairmen of the Joint Commission established to implement the agreement signed by the Russian and Chechen sides in August 1996. They offered the ICRC's services as a neutral intermediary in facilitating the release of detainees.

An ICRC programme to promote and facilitate the implementation of international humanitarian law at national level was presented by the Moscow delegation to the legal department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Representatives of the Russian Federation took part in an ICRC-organized seminar on questions related to implementation, namely the setting-up of interministerial committees at national level, held in Geneva in October. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs supported the idea of organizing a national seminar in the Russian Federation in cooperation with the ICRC.

Throughout the year the Moscow delegation concentrated on its extensive dissemination programmes and on cooperation with the tracing services of the Russian Red Cross and other National Societies of the countries of the former Soviet Union. The delegation arranged for a number of people living in the southern Caucasus to be reunited with their families in Russia and handled the exchange of Red Cross messages between detainees arrested in connection with the Chechen conflict and their families in the Republic of Chechnya. Red Cross

### MOSCOW REGIONAL DELEGATION

Total expenditure in 1996:  
Sfr 35,302,679





*Cooperation with  
National Societies  
and local  
Red Cross committees*

messages for addressees in other parts of Russia were handled by the Russian Red Cross. As in the two preceding years, the ICRC provided the Russian Red Cross tracing service, which still served as a model for most National Societies in the region, with substantial material assistance.

Cooperation was formally extended to include other activities mainly in aid of five local Red Cross committees in the northern Caucasus (Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia). The ICRC helped them meet emergency needs in the region, for example by providing food parcels and warm clothes. Moreover, ICRC-supported Red Cross programmes for elderly and disabled people were set up in all five republics, with the long-term aim of enabling the committees to carry out community-relevant medical and social work independently.

*programmes  
for schoolchildren*

The Russian Red Cross was also associated with the ICRC schools programme. It helped develop the concept and supervised distribution of teaching materials in the various regions. The programme was designed with a view to familiarizing 11 to 12 year old students throughout countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States with the principles underlying international humanitarian law and the mandate and activities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is based on a teaching file developed in 1993 by the Geneva branch of the Swiss Red Cross for local primary schools and involves the use of selected texts reflecting Red Cross concerns about human behaviour in situations of violence. As the words "Russian Red Cross" appeared in print on well over two million textbooks, the programme opened up the opportunity for the National Society to make itself known to young people across the enormous territory of the Russian Federation.

Test runs were first launched in a number of countries of the former Soviet Union in 1994, namely Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Coordinated by a delegate in Moscow and in cooperation with the Ministries of Education concerned, ICRC delegates together with local assistants adapted the textbooks and teachers' manuals to the cultural and educational context of each country by using examples from local literature and taking into account local teaching methods. Feasibility studies in other central Asian countries were under way in 1996.

*cooperation with  
military academies*

Despite the military and political upheaval resulting from the events in the northern Caucasus and the Russian presidential elections, the ICRC achieved a breakthrough in its relations with the Federal military hierarchy. Following intensive discussions, the Ministry of Internal Affairs submitted a proposal to the ICRC for closer cooperation with two prestigious military training academies with a view to organizing courses on the law of war for officers of army units that may be deployed in situations of internal conflict. A cooperation agreement was also signed with the Federal border guard service. The Moscow dele-



## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- covered 19 salaries plus running costs for the Russian Red Cross tracing service;
- concluded an agreement with the National Society aimed at supporting the national Red Cross museum, which is used for presentations on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for school classes and nursing students;
- organized 2 training seminars in Smolensk and Vladivostok for Russian Red Cross staff involved in dissemination work, bringing to 11 the number of training seminars organized throughout the Russian Federation since 1993;
- organized a seminar for the heads of tracing services of 15 National Societies of the former Soviet Union, with the participation of the directors of the International Tracing Service in Arolsen and the American Red Cross Holocaust Centre in Baltimore and representatives of the tracing services of the Polish and German Red Cross Societies;
- supported Red Cross home-care and "meals-on-wheels" programmes for elderly and disabled people in Chechnya and the four neighbouring republics.



- in cooperation with regional and local Red Cross committees, arranged for the ICRC's travelling exhibition on humanitarian law to be shown in a number of places including the Siberian towns of Novosibirsk, Kemerovo and Barnaul before moving on to Central Asia;
- in September held a first regional seminar in Moscow for representatives of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defence and the armed forces of CIS countries;
- translated into Russian and printed 120 texts, including both books and shorter publications;
- under the schools programme, produced and distributed textbooks and manuals to nearly 2.3 million fifth-form students and 115,000 teachers in the Russian Federation;
- for the first time in Russia, and with the participation of Russian and western university professors and other specialists, organized a seminar on the teaching of humanitarian law for some 40 junior lecturers and assistants from international law and relations departments of universities in the Russian Federation and a number of other CIS countries;

- under the publications programme, published two issues of the ICRC periodical covering operations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, *Challenges*, with a focus on the schools programme and the ICRC's local staff; continued to produce the *International Review of the Red Cross* in Russian, for the first time including an article contributed by a Russian university professor.



gation fostered contacts with other services of the armed forces and the government ministries responsible for them, particularly the Ministry of Defence, so as to encourage the incorporation of the law of war into their training programmes.

In its dissemination approach to universities, the ICRC concentrated on making reference materials on humanitarian law available in Russian (by the end of 1996 all major texts on the subject had been translated and distributed to university libraries throughout the country) and on training future instructors. At the political level, the introduction of humanitarian law as a subject in to the Federal curriculum for international law and journalism faculties spelled significant progress.

The Moscow delegation also functioned as a decentralized publishing unit for all Russian language publications and contributed significantly to making texts on humanitarian work and international humanitarian law available to a new readership in CIS\* countries. The conflict in the northern Caucasus gave rise to considerable interest in international humanitarian law, which meant that in addition to publishing and translating new texts, existing documents had to be updated and reprinted.

## *Northern Caucasus*

For the ICRC, as for other international humanitarian organizations working in the northern Caucasus, the year 1996 was fraught with security problems. However, nothing had prepared it for the tragedy that was to strike four months after the Russian and the Chechen sides had concluded a ceasefire and while peace negotiations were going on: the cold-blooded murder of six of its delegates working at the Novye Atagi field hospital by unidentified gunmen during the night of 16/17 December.

The year began with renewed fighting in the Republic of Chechnya between federal troops and Chechen separatists, impelling successive waves of civilians to leave for neighbouring republics. Those who did not flee remained trapped in their homes for weeks at a time whilst their towns and villages were being shelled. Despite the call for negotiations launched by the President of the Russian Federation on 31 March, hostilities in the south intensified. The separatist leader was killed in April.

In May, under the auspices of the OSCE,\* representatives of the Federal government, the Chechen government and the separatists met in Moscow and

*large-scale offensive  
in Chechnya*

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\* CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

\* OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe



signed a preliminary cease-fire accord. The ensuing uneasy silence of the guns lasted until after the federal presidential elections in June, during which the incumbent President was reelected. Tension mounted once again and resulted in a large-scale Federal offensive in July. For three weeks, villages in southern Chechnya sustained heavy attacks, while in Grozny hardly a day went by without both military and civilian targets coming under fire. On 6 August separatist forces launched an offensive on Grozny and took control of the city after two weeks of bitter fighting. The Federal forces delivered an ultimatum announcing their intention to storm Grozny unless the separatists withdrew. About 200,000 civilians fled the city.

Fortunately, thanks in part to the diplomatic efforts of the international community, the threat of a showdown was defused. Negotiations resumed, resulting in a cease-fire concluded in Novye Atagi on 22 August. On 31 August the parties signed an agreement in Khasavyurt (Daghestan) providing for the pull-out of Federal troops; settlement of the status of the Republic of Chechnya within five years; and the establishment of a joint commission to put the agreement into effect. Although differences persisted, there was no more fighting. In November the Russian President decreed the withdrawal of all federal troops, which paved the way for elections to be held in the Republic of Chechnya early the following year.

Throughout the year, security was a major concern for the ICRC. During a first meeting with the Russian Federal authorities in Moscow in January, the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia expressed its alarm about a series of incidents that had affected its operation in the Republic of Chechnya earlier that month. The hazardous conditions led the ICRC to reduce staff to the operational minimum and tighten security measures.

In March the ICRC President met the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs in Moscow. He raised a number of points that had been a source of concern to the organization practically since the beginning of the conflict, such as the

*presidential mission to Moscow*





conduct of hostilities without regard for humanitarian rules and the lack of access to captured combatants, and handed over to the Minister a report containing delegates' findings. The ICRC President pursued discussions with the Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs at the organization's Geneva headquarters.

In May the Delegate General and the Director of Operations conducted a mission to evaluate the ICRC operation in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, particularly from the point of view of security.

In July, after another incident, the Delegate General, accompanied by the head of the Moscow delegation and the head of the ICRC mission in the northern Caucasus, met the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs in Moscow with a view to securing his support in avoiding further incidents.

In October, the newly appointed Delegate General met the President of the Republic of Chechnya who was visiting the recently opened ICRC field hospital in Noye Atagi. Security problems were again discussed. More incidents involving ICRC employees and expatriates working for other organizations ensued in November, mostly caused by banditry. Following another meeting with the Chechen President, who had helped obtain the release of an abducted sanitation engineer, the ICRC mission in Grozny took additional security measures. As it turned out, to no avail.

Although the provision of assistance to vulnerable groups and medical and sanitary rehabilitation activities had reached peak levels in the wake of the August cease-fire, the murders of 17 December forced the institution to suspend all programmes requiring the presence of expatriates within Chechnya; only a limited number of activities went on, carried out by the local Red Cross committees and the Ministry of Health.

Perhaps more than its other activities in connection with the Chechen conflict, the ICRC's protection work was seriously impaired by the drastic worsening of security conditions at the beginning of the year. Although both sides agreed in principle to let delegates visit detainees, in practice this was not always the case. As they did not have consistent access to places of detention and conflict zones, it was extremely difficult to identify the problems facing detainees and the general population and to take effective action to help them.

After a hiatus of more than five months, in May the ICRC was once again allowed to visit people detained by the Russian Federal authorities in the northern Caucasus. During his meeting with the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs in July, the Delegate General reiterated the ICRC's wish to be notified of all arrests made by the Federal authorities and to be allowed to have access to all detainees held as a result of the Chechen conflict. A dialogue initiated with the Chechen authorities enabled delegates on several occasions to visit detainees held in government prisons. A few visits were also conducted to

*access to detainees*



people held by Chechen separatist forces. However, as no single central authority was in charge of these detainees and most of them were held by different local commanders, they were hard to locate.

The events in August again brought things to a halt. After numerous contacts with the Federal authorities, the ICRC was able to resume visits to some detainees held in the neighbouring republics. Contacts with the new Chechen authorities enabled delegates in December to conduct a first visit to a detention centre in northern Chechnya, and to detainees held in Argun. The visits were conducted in accordance with customary ICRC procedures.

As discussions about a simultaneous release of prisoners were under way, the ICRC offered its services to the parties in order to help, as a neutral intermediary, in carrying out the release operation. The parties did not accept the offer, and although they had agreed to release all prisoners on both sides, they were still holding a number of detainees at the end of the year.

Material assistance was given to the places of detention visited by delegates, and detainees who were released and wanted to return home received some financial support.

Throughout the year the ICRC kept a close watch on the situation in the Prigorodny district in North Ossetia, where heavy fighting took place in 1992. There were no major incidents, but the situation between Ingush and Ossetians remained tense. Delegates visited nine Ingush people detained by the Federal authorities in connection with the Ingush-Ossetian conflict. Another point of concern was the situation in Daghestan, where significant numbers of internally displaced Chechens put the hospitality of their neighbours to the test, especially following a hostage-taking incident in Kizlyar in January.

*concern for the  
civilian population*

Again in 1996, there were too many examples of the suffering endured by civilians when war is waged with no regard for humanitarian rules. The population was exposed to all kinds of abuse ranging from threats and harassment to hostage-taking and the indiscriminate use of military force. Despite the fighting, the ICRC managed to stay in southern Chechnya, and even in Grozny, almost permanently. Representations were regularly made to the authorities concerned to obtain their indispensable cooperation in enforcing respect for international humanitarian law and the red cross emblem. Delegates did their best to spread knowledge of that law in every possible way, not only through dissemination activities as such, but also in the course of their medical and relief work.

Even once the fighting had ceased, many families were still searching for news of their next-of-kin. The ICRC kept in close touch with official and private committees that were set up to deal with the tide of inquiries. At the same time, delegates collected allegations of arrests which were then brought to the

*Red Cross message  
network*



attention of the authorities. The ICRC repeatedly made known its readiness to assist the parties in shedding light on the fate of people who were being sought.

The ICRC Red Cross message network played an essential part in this search. During the crisis that befell Grozny in August, for example, it immediately enabled people to communicate with relatives from whom they had been separated. In the last few weeks of 1996, the number of messages dropped slightly as the situation stabilized. They were collected and distributed mostly by ICRC teams, although the local Chechen committee of the Russian Red Cross had begun to take part in this activity in Grozny. The service was also regularly provided to detainees visited by ICRC delegates. The Red Cross message network was suspended after 17 December.

With a view to promoting knowledge of and compliance with international humanitarian law, delegates maintained contact with the military and political authorities in Moscow and the Federal military command and armed forces in the northern Caucasus, as well as with the Chechen authorities and the Chechen separatists.

At the beginning of the year the Federal forces gave their consent for the ICRC to carry out dissemination activities for troops stationed in the northern Caucasus. Delegates held formal teaching sessions on humanitarian law in barracks mainly outside the conflict area. They also gave presentations on the ICRC's work in order to improve contacts with the troops in the field both in Chechnya and elsewhere. Furthermore, an information campaign was launched in the media in the northern Caucasus, including radio broadcasts and articles and interviews in both the military and civilian press. Crossword puzzles and a quiz on humanitarian law and the history of humanitarian action were also used as dissemination tools. A new publication was produced with the aim of introducing young Russian soldiers to the basics of humanitarian law and the ICRC's work through a series of drawings by well-known cartoonists. Contacts with Chechen fighters started out on an informal basis and took place in the course of the delegates' fieldwork or through the local council of elders. Other projects included a study on Chechen customary law, which enabled a folk song encouraging respect for prisoners and civilians to be composed. A traditional play, to be performed in the villages to audiences of civilians and fighters, was being prepared at the time of the ICRC's withdrawal.

*promotion of  
humanitarian law*

Throughout the year the ICRC regularly assisted a number of health centres treating the war-wounded, including mine casualties, in the Republic of Chechnya, and extended this aid to other facilities as needed. It took the form of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, as well as repairs and emergency rehabilitation work. Elsewhere, one-off emergency aid was given to the Kizlyar hospital in Daghestan which was partly destroyed in the hostage-

*support for local  
health facilities*



taking earlier in the year, and to the republican hospital in Nalchik following admission of 37 people who had been wounded in an explosion in June.

After the cease-fire in August, the ICRC again took stock of the situation. As the new Chechen health authorities were having great difficulty in providing medical supplies, the organization had to step up its assistance to health facilities. In Grozny, all the hospitals had been destroyed or badly damaged during the fighting. Following a survey of the city's medical facilities, the ICRC worked to rehabilitate Hospital No. 9, enabling the surgical ward to resume functioning in mid-October, and to refurbish the Hospital No. 4 maternity ward. Hostilities flared up again several times, preventing plans for rehabilitating the blood transfusion centre and the prosthetic workshop in Grozny from being carried out. However, work on the blood transfusion centre had started by the end of the year and the other two projects already under way were being continued, despite the tragic events of 17 December.

At the beginning of September, the ICRC opened its own independent hospital in Novye Atagi, 20 kilometres south of Grozny, to provide the specialized surgical care urgently needed for the war-wounded. In so doing, it intended to ensure equal access to this type of care for combatants on both sides. Furthermore, it wished to demonstrate the principle of neutrality of medical facilities in a conflict zone. Donated and supported by the Norwegian government and National Society, the field hospital started work on 2 September with two surgical teams. Most of the operations performed there consisted in corrective surgery for patients whose wounds could not be adequately treated while fighting was under way and only a minimum of medical materials and medicines were available. The patients also included mine victims and people who had been hit by stray bullets. After the murderous incident of 17 December, responsibility for the facility was handed over to the Ministry of Health, and local ICRC staff cared for the remaining patients.

*ICRC hospital  
in Novye Atagi*

The conflict had disastrous effects on public utilities in many localities, leaving the population without drinking water, electricity and proper sanitation for prolonged periods. As in the previous year, in some parts of Grozny people relied entirely on the ICRC to provide water. In August key supply facilities were damaged in the fighting, leaving only one water pumping station serviceable (one of the two that had been set up by the ICRC in 1995). The organization's engineers significantly raised its production capacity. From September to mid-October, the ICRC was the main provider of safe drinking water for the whole of Grozny. After 17 December the pumping station was operated by local staff.

*rehabilitation of  
water-supply systems*

Towards the end of the year, the greatest risk for the population of Grozny stemmed from the enormous amount of waste water and sewage that had accumulated since August. The drainage system was completely clogged,



leaving pumping stations unable to function and causing sewers to overflow. ICRC engineers set about clearing and repairing the city's 13 pumping stations, enabling sewage water to be evacuated from the basements of residential buildings at a rate of 300 cubic metres per day. The operation was discontinued after 17 December.

Villages in the south and east of Chechnya, such as Sernovodsk and Samashki which were badly shelled in March, also benefited from water

Northern Caucasus



– visited some 200 people detained in 25 places of detention in connection with the conflict in the Republic of Chechnya and the conflict between North Ossetians and Ingush.



– enabled civilians and detainees to exchange more than 23,000 messages with their families.



– in all, provided more than 3,000 tonnes of relief supplies to 400,000 people;

- at the beginning of the year, distributed winter clothes to 47,000 displaced people in Daghestan and Ingushetia;
- throughout the year, extended its community kitchen programme in cooperation with the local Red Cross branch to 13 kitchens in Grozny, 3 in Gudermes and 1 in Argun, providing more than 7,000 meals each day;
- by supporting the local Red Cross committee's home-care programme, mainly in Grozny but also in Argun, Gudermes,

## IN 1996 THE ICRC:

Shali and Urus Martan, provided meals to some 700 bedridden elderly people;

- provided food and other supplies to 10 institutions caring for psychiatric and disabled patients and orphans;
- after the fighting in August, regularly provided 20,000 vulnerable people in Grozny, Argun and Gudermes with food parcels and wheat flour, blankets and plastic sheeting;
- distributed food, blankets, hygiene kits and plastic sheeting to repair windows and roofs to 35,000 villagers in southern Chechnya;
- supplied books and writing and knitting materials, etc., to 70,000 schoolchildren in Chechnya (Grozny, Argun and Gudermes), Daghestan and Ingushetia, as well as school snacks to some 20,000 children in Grozny;
- helped to rebuild or repair schools and distributed cement and plastic sheeting, plus 430 stoves enabling classrooms to be heated;
- distributed some 25,000 sets of winter clothes for children to families in the northern Caucasus.



– assisted, in all, more than 50 medical facilities in the republics of Chechnya and Daghestan, of which more than 20 received regular assistance;

- in Grozny, carried out repairs to Hospital No. 9, nearly completed refurbishment of the Hospital No. 4 maternity ward;
- opened the Novye Atagi field hospital, where expatriate and local staff treated 321 in-patients, performed nearly 600 surgical operations and gave more than 1,700 out-patient consultations;
- supported the visiting nurses programme run by the local branch of the Russian Red Cross in the republics of Chechnya, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, which provided medical care for 700 elderly and bedridden people at home.



– in all, produced 230 million litres of safe drinking water in ICRC water pumping stations and distributed



distribution operations and the rehabilitation of pumping stations. Various projects were carried out in Gudermes and Khasavyurt to improve the water and sanitation infrastructure. Once rehabilitation of the main pumping station in Khasavyurt had been completed, responsibility for running it was handed over to the authorities.

Until the cease-fire was reached in August, the ICRC responded to successive emergencies arising from military operations in Chechnya. Each

135 million litres by ICRC trucks in the northern Caucasus;

- in Grozny (January to November) produced 132,000 cu.m of chlorinated water and distributed 58,000 cu. m to hospitals and suburbs;
- in Gudermes (May to September) 8 ICRC water trucks distributed 16,000 cu. m and engineers set up a water pumping station;
- in Sernovodsk (March to July) produced 10,000 cu. m and distributed 7,000 cu. m, and Samashki (April to December) produced 72,000 cu. m and distributed 53,000 cu. m;
- in Engel-Yurt and Novogroznensky, kept the hospital supplied with water;
- After the cease-fire in August, provided 1 million litres of chlorinated water daily, of which ICRC trucks transported some 400,000 litres to storage tanks at 57 distribution points throughout the city (the remainder was distributed by other organizations and private vehicles);
- launched a major waste evacuation operation to get the sewage system in

Grozny, including 13 pumping stations, working again;

- continued to provide daily supplies of clean water to four schools and a hospital in Gudermes and Samashki.
- throughout the year, carried out activities including latrine-building, water deliveries, reconnection to main water and power supply networks, disinfection and waste management in 30 collective centres housing some 4,700 displaced people in Khasavyurt;
- repaired the main pumping station in Khasavyurt (capacity: 120,000 cu. m per day), and in September started a water project to rehabilitate spring catchments for 7,000 inhabitants of the Anoli and Gogath villages near the Chechen border.



- organized a training course for tracing staff of Russian Red Cross branches in the northern Caucasus, and provided office equipment, stationery etc.;

- supported medical and social welfare programmes of the local branches of the Russian Red Cross in Chechnya and 4 neighbouring republics, and launched a relief project benefiting some 10,000 vulnerable families in Ingushetia and North Ossetia.



- organized over 50 presentations on humanitarian law and the work of the ICRC for more than 4,500

Federal troops stationed in the northern Caucasus, and 4 two-day training seminars for 180 army instructors;

- distributed to soldiers thousands of first-aid kits containing leaflets on the basic rules of behaviour in combat;
- in 3 radio spots, which were broadcast three times a day for two months on Radio Grozny and once a month on International Radio Liberty, advocated humane behaviour in combat;
- throughout the year, published articles on the ICRC, the law of war and the operation in the northern Caucasus in four military journals.



*assistance to the displaced  
and those who stayed  
behind*

crisis set tens of thousands people on the move, either within Chechnya or to the neighbouring republics. Basic food and other relief supplies were provided for the displaced, as well as those who chose to stay behind. As a result of the battle for Grozny alone, from mid-August to mid-September the ICRC assisted more than 160,000 people. In villages in southern Chechnya which were cut off during the hostilities in the summer, assistance was distributed to selected beneficiaries in close cooperation with the local secular and religious authorities.

After the fighting stopped, the ICRC regularly carried out distributions for vulnerable people in Grozny, Argun and Gudermes, in cooperation with the local Russian Red Cross committees. In the republics of Daghestan and Ingushetia, it continued to provide assistance to those who had been displaced. An assistance programme was launched both there and in Chechnya with the aim of enabling poor families to send their children to school.

Throughout the year the ICRC regularly supported community kitchens and opened additional ones. It also assisted medical and social institutions and supported welfare activities, mainly home-care and visiting nurses programmes, of the local branches of the Russian Red Cross in the five republics of the northern Caucasus. Under these programmes, nurses employed by these local committees provided medical care and distributed hot meals. In March, together with the local Russian Red Cross branches in Ingushetia and North Ossetia, the ICRC initiated a project aimed at assisting vulnerable families (1-2 per cent of the population) with food and other supplies. This included training the local branches' senior staff and involving them in selecting the beneficiaries.



# The Caucasus

## ARMENIA/ AZERBAIJAN

Even as the cease-fire that ended hostilities over the Nagorny Karabakh issue entered its third year, hardly a week went by without skirmishes along the front lines. Another six rounds of negotiations held under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group did not bring the parties closer to a definitive settlement. The Lachin corridor and other territories continued to be disputed. What remained indisputable was the sad legacy of the six-year conflict — the approximately one million people who had been uprooted. Some 350,000 refugees from Azerbaijan (including 40,000 from Nagorny Karabakh) were living in Armenia, while Azerbaijan had about half a million internally displaced people and nearly 170,000 refugees from Armenia. This bleak picture was aggravated by severe economic problems, and in some cases internal political tensions. Poverty remained a fact of life for many.

In May, the second anniversary of the cease-fire at last saw the release under ICRC supervision of 109 detainees it had been visiting in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh; the last detainee visited in this context was freed in September. Russian mediators worked together with the organization to secure this trilateral release, and the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was present at the transfer of the detainees, played an active role throughout the operation. However, for the ICRC the chapter was not yet closed as people were still being detained in the region as a result of the conflict. It therefore kept up its efforts to gain access to them and obtain their release. Besides not allowing the ICRC to have access to all categories of detainees and places of detention, the authorities failed to notify the organization systematically of new arrests. Limited but regular assistance in the form of basic food rations was necessary, and medical care for the prison population required significant improvement.



ICRC delegation



ICRC presence



Prosthetic/orthotic centre/workshop

ICRC / AR 12.96

*access to detainees*

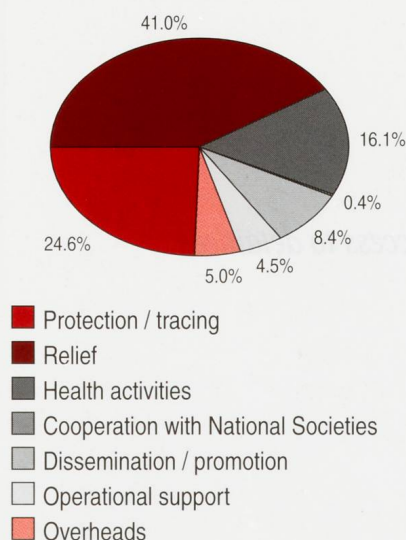


2,500 tracing requests

*promotion of  
humanitarian law*

## ARMENIA/AZERBAIJAN

Total expenditure in 1996:  
**Sfr 10,094,517**



Many families were still looking for relatives who had remained unaccounted for since the renewed flare-up of fighting in December 1993 and May 1994, and even earlier phases of the conflict. By the end of 1996 delegates had collected a total of over 2,500 tracing requests. In submitting some specific requests to the Armenian, Azeri and Karabakhi authorities, the ICRC made a renewed effort to remind them of their obligation under humanitarian law to help ascertain the fate of all those still missing. However, by the end of the year it had still not received any replies that might help shed light on these cases.

As during the years of conflict, Red Cross messages were the only means of communication between detainees and their families, and often also for relatives who had been separated by the hostilities.

In November an ICRC legal delegate conducted a mission to Baku and Yerevan to discuss implementation of humanitarian law at national level with representatives of government and parliament. In Armenia and Azerbaijan legal experts were recruited to study the national law so as to facilitate the incorporation of humanitarian law.

As key contributors to the implementation, development and interpretation of humanitarian law, university lecturers and students remained a priority audience. The ICRC fostered contacts with a view to introducing lectures on humanitarian law at university level, and ultimately having humanitarian law incorporated into the curricula of leading academic institutions as part of such subjects as law, medicine and journalism. University libraries were stocked with reference works on the subject. Delegates gave presentations at Baku State University, and lecturers from Baku and Yerevan universities attended the first ICRC training course on humanitarian law held in Moscow in August.

Printed and illustrated dissemination materials in the local languages were distributed regularly and more specialized publications on humanitarian law were made available in Russian, thanks to the extensive multilingual publications programme run by the regional delegation in Moscow. To choose the design of a calendar for 1997, the Baku delegation, together with the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan, organized a contest for artists and photographers. The winning entry was a modern painting. In designing their calendar, the Yerevan delegation opted for the use of traditional proverbs to show the similarity of customary Armenian law and humanitarian law.

The schools programme<sup>1</sup> went into a test run in spring 1996 which involved the launching of 3,000 copies of a textbook. The final version for all fifth-form students of Armenia's and Azerbaijan's secondary schools was completed and went into print. The programme was extended to Nagorny Karabakh, where

<sup>1</sup> See *Moscow regional delegation*, p. 196.



some 3,000 textbooks and teacher's manuals were distributed to fourth-form students and their instructors, together with notepads and pencils.

A first-aid training programme for both Armenian Red Cross and Azeri Red Crescent volunteers was in progress in eight front-line districts, as part of the ICRC/American Red Cross delegated project in these areas. The regional branches of the Armenian Red Cross Society and the Red Crescent of Azerbaijan took part in the ICRC's relief work, for example by providing lists of beneficiaries when distributions to vulnerable and displaced people were carried out. Training and material and financial assistance were given to the National Society services in charge of dissemination and the restoration of family links.

In Armenia, the ICRC received authorization in January to visit all persons held in places of detention under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior and of the State National Security Agency. In the course of their visits, delegates identified some 40 people coming within the ICRC's purview although they were not detained in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. In mid-August delegates visited 15 newly arrested Kurdish detainees; visits continued throughout the year. Following the arrest of dozens of people in the aftermath of the Armenian presidential elections in September and the ensuing disturbances, the ICRC extended its protection to these new detainees.

*authorization to visit  
detainees in Armenia*

The organization continued to seek permission from the various government ministries responsible for armed units, particularly those stationed near the front line, to instruct officers and other ranks in the law of war. However, the Ministry of Defence merely authorized a first-aid course for soldiers.

The ICRC's medical activities in Armenia focused on the detainee population. As elsewhere in the region, tuberculosis was spreading, and particularly in prisons. The ICRC intended to set up a tuberculosis treatment centre, in co-operation with the authorities, along the lines of the programme it was running in Baku.

An ICRC engineer began a survey of water and sanitation facilities in the four regions of Armenia where the American Red Cross was carrying out a relief project under ICRC responsibility, so as to launch a rehabilitation programme in the villages where needs were most urgent.

The ICRC project carried out by the American Red Cross in cooperation with the Armenian Red Cross went into its third year. For the inhabitants of 17 villages situated within five kilometres of the border with Azerbaijan, life had still not returned to normal: sporadic exchanges of artillery fire and mine-ridden fields prevented agricultural work from resuming full-scale. Despite regular relief distributions to some 9,000 families, a survey conducted in May showed that the food situation was still critical. The ICRC therefore concentrated on reviving agricultural activity and restoring a degree of self-

*assistance in the  
border regions*



### *access to detainees in Azerbaijan*

sufficiency to the population by providing seed potatoes and wheat grain for sowing, supplemented by distributions of some staple foods.

Special assistance was given to impoverished families with children, including clothes and writing materials enabling them to go to school through the winter.

In Azerbaijan, delegates resumed visits in July to a detention camp in Baku, where they registered and followed up the cases of 12 people of Armenian origin. As the ICRC did not succeed in gaining access to security detainees held in connection with the internal situation in the country, intensive negotiations continued with the government ministries concerned. However, no result had been obtained at the end of the year.

Delegates kept a close watch on the situation in the Baku region, where there were still vulnerable minority groups. Whenever cases of discrimination and harassment were brought to their attention, delegates did their best to prevail over the authorities to put an end to such practices. By so doing, they were able, for example, to help people to obtain official identity papers and pensions. When protection efforts failed, the ICRC arranged transport and repatriations for people wishing to move to other countries in the region.

The ICRC's mine-awareness work started in Azerbaijan at the beginning of the year. The aim was to help the population, including displaced people who had just returned home, to cope with the dangers involved in living in heavily mined areas such as the Fizuli district. The ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic programme for war amputees, many of whom are landmine casualties, served to illustrate the risks people run in such circumstances. In addition, information leaflets on the danger of landmines were included in seed kits and relief parcels and distributed to people in front-line areas. These first initiatives were bolstered in the autumn by a project delegated to the Swedish Red Cross that enabled a coordinated campaign to be organized in the eight front-line districts where the ICRC was working.

Contact was maintained with the various Azeri government ministries responsible for armed units, especially those stationed near the front line, with the aim of obtaining permission to instruct all levels of the armed forces in the law of war. Dissemination sessions were frequently organized for units under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of the Interior and Defence, and for the border guards under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Security. At the end of November the Minister of Defence accepted the ICRC's request to name a liaison officer in each front-line district in order to facilitate dissemination work there.

The ICRC monitored medical facilities treating people injured during hostilities; there was a noticeable decline in the incidence of such injuries. It provided ad hoc medical assistance to five hospitals when needs were not met by the authorities.

### *landmine casualties*



The ICRC kept up its tuberculosis treatment programme in a prison hospital run by the Ministry of Justice in Baku. Apart from providing treatment for 120 prisoners, the intention was to show how the disease may be tackled effectively. One of the difficulties was that the disease was proving increasingly resistant to conventional treatments. The organization spared no effort to make medical and political decision-makers aware of the extent of the problem and their responsibility in dealing with it.

Work at the ICRC prosthetic/orthotic centre for war amputees, run in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population in Baku was well under way, enabling people who had lost a limb as a result of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict to be fitted with artificial limbs reasonably rapidly (the number of war amputees in Azerbaijan was estimated at well over 500). An officially recognized diploma course was prepared for the 24 local employees, who had so far only received on-the-job training.

In Azerbaijan's southern front-line district of Fizuli, many wells had been destroyed. Together with local technicians, the ICRC rehabilitated wells by putting in new water pumps and restoring the electricity supply. This meant renewed access to drinking water for some 20,000 displaced people and local residents.

The ICRC delegated to the American Red Cross its relief project for vulnerable people (including the disabled, elderly people without family, war widows and destitute people) in the eight front-line districts bordering Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh. Together with the local branch of the Red Crescent Society of Azerbaijan, the American Red Cross, based at the ICRC's sub-delegation in Barda, carried out distributions of family parcels and bulk food every two months.

The ICRC, for its part, concentrated its assistance (including food, blankets, candles, used clothes and soap) on some 3,000 displaced families in the Fizuli district, which remained a potential conflict zone. It also provided vegetable seed and gardening tools, together with information leaflets on the dangers of landmines, to vulnerable local families.

To help along agricultural rehabilitation and stimulate the local economy, the ICRC distributed wheat grain for sowing to some 30 private or semi-private local farms in the Fizuli district at the end of 1996. The objective was to redistribute the resulting yield in the form of flour to the ICRC's beneficiaries in the region the following summer.

To enable poor families in the four northern front-line districts and the Fizuli district to send their children to school, it also provided warm clothes and shoes. In addition, it surveyed existing school buildings with a view to repairing or rebuilding them.

*distributions to vulnerable people and agricultural rehabilitation*



## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- visited 212 detainees held for conflict-related and security reasons in 38 places of detention, and supervised the release of 110 detainees.

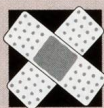


- organized the exchange of 5,500 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families and between relatives separated by conflict.



- in Armenia, supported the relief project for some 8,000 families living along the north-eastern border with Azerbaijan, carried out by the American Red Cross under ICRC responsibility;
- in Nagorny Karabakh, carried out the "Teamwork" programme aimed at restoring self-sufficiency to some 3,000 families living in 30 villages in the districts most affected by the conflict (Hadrut and Martakert);
- in the front-line districts in Azerbaijan, supported the delegated project carried out by the American Red Cross for some 40,000 vulnerable people by providing some 1,000 tonnes of food and nearly 70 tonnes of other supplies;
- in the Fizuli district, distributed 453.5 tonnes of bulk food, 3.2 tonnes of soap and 5 tonnes of detergent to some 3,000 displaced people and vulnerable residents; as well as 185 tonnes of seed and 1,992 seed kits;

- enabled some 2,000 children in the Fizuli district to go to school by providing writing materials, clothes and shoes.



- provided medical supplies for 14 hospitals treating the war-wounded in Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh, and medicines and essential supplies for 15 civilian dispensaries in Nagorny Karabakh;
- ran a programme providing treatment for 120 tuberculosis patients at the prison hospital under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice in Baku.



- in cooperation with the Azeri Ministry for Labour and Social Protection, produced 432 artificial limbs for war amputees and manufactured 189 pairs of crutches;
- provided treatment for 35 war casualties flown in from Tajikistan to the prosthetic/ orthotic centre in Baku.



- rehabilitated 13 wells in the Fizuli district (Azerbaijan) and in Nagorny Karabakh, thereby providing renewed access to safe drinking water for people living in villages near the front lines.



- organized national seminars on the implementation of humanitarian law in Baku and Yerevan in May, with the participation of UNESCO;
- conducted a dissemination/first-aid programme for some 420 soldiers in Armenia;
- in Azerbaijan, organized a seminar for 35 instructors of the Ministry of Defence and two of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as 28 presentations on international humanitarian law for over 3,700 military personnel.



In Nagorny Karabakh, the ICRC continued to visit persons detained as a result of the conflict. In the months following the release operation in May, delegates obtained access to some new detainees.

Both military and civilian medical services in the region were still facing severe shortages of medicines and basic medical supplies. The ICRC assisted medical facilities run by the Ministry of Defence in front-line districts where victims of mine explosions and sniper fire, and other war casualties were treated. In the regions where it was carrying out relief and sanitation work, it continued to provide medicines and essential supplies to civilian dispensaries.

For the second year running, the scant rainfall threatened to leave Nagorny Karabakh parched and unproductive. Water was urgently needed not only for drinking, but also to irrigate the many vegetable gardens, which are a substantial source of food for the population (in Martakert, for example, almost all of the town's 3,000 inhabitants grow their own vegetables). ICRC water and sanitation engineers managed to put a number of wells back into service with the help of local workmen.

Based on a combination of food distributions, agricultural projects, construction aid and water and sanitation measures, the "Teamwork" programme in Nagorny Karabakh was designed to help villagers in the particularly hard-hit north-eastern and southern districts of Hadrut and Martakert to become self-supporting again. While seed distributions were the mainstay of this operation, food was also supplied to tide families over until the next harvest. Some construction materials were provided for people without adequate shelter, mainly returnees. Although the overall situation in the assisted villages improved, in most of them the drought prevented the kind of harvest needed to regain self-sufficiency. The ICRC immediately reacted by distributing grain for winter sowing to avoid any impact of the drought on next year's harvest.

*water for  
Nagorny Karabakh*





# GEORGIA



ICRC delegation  
 ICRC presence  
 Prosthetic/orthotic centre/workshop

Politically speaking, 1996 was one of the calmest years since Georgia obtained independence five years earlier. As a result, international aid declined for people displaced from southern Abkhazia to Mingrelia (western Georgia) in connection with the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. This population continued to add to the country's already considerable economic problems: for the third year running, the supply of gas and electricity was highly unreliable; unemployment soared; most medical services were no longer free of charge and therefore beyond the means of most people; and the price of bread and other basic commodities more than doubled.

Georgia and South Ossetia erased the last traces of the hostilities of 1991/92 by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on security and confidence-building measures in May.

The status of Abkhazia remained unsettled, and the economic embargo continued. Rampant crime and all manner

of violence, including anti-tank mine explosions, posed a serious threat, especially in Gali and Ochamchira in southern Abkhazia. On several occasions the ICRC and other organizations had to suspend field activities there. However, towards the end of the year the ICRC opened an office in Gali with a view to offering increased protection for threatened minorities. In the last quarter, elections (declared illegal by the Georgian authorities and not recognized by the international community) were held in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During the election period, tension increased and security incidents became more frequent in the Gali region, while unrest grew among the displaced population in western Georgia. However, once the elections were over, formal Georgian-Abkhaz peace talks resumed in December, centering on the return of refugees and displaced people to the Gali region and alleviation of economic sanctions. No tangible results had been achieved by the end of the year. The mandate of the CIS peace-keeping forces along the Inguri river was extended until January 1997.



The ICRC's protection activities for detainees progressed significantly. Efforts to persuade the authorities in Georgia to grant delegates unrestricted access to all detainees in all places of detention, including security detainees still under interrogation, at last paid off. Support from the highest quarters in the form of an official decree signed by the Georgian President in October enabled delegates to conduct their visits in accordance with customary ICRC practice. In a letter to him, the ICRC President expressed the organization's satisfaction with this step, which is expected not only to facilitate protection activities in Georgia but also to serve as an example for other CIS countries to follow suit. During the last quarter, with the consent of the authorities concerned, the ICRC started to arrange for detainees on both sides to be visited by their families. A first visit took place across the front lines in December. Delegates also helped to transmit family parcels to the detainees. In Abkhazia, the ICRC continued to visit persons detained in connection with the conflict.

Hostage-taking was unfortunately still common practice. On several occasions, delegates visited and registered people held as hostages on both the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. The ICRC did what it could to obtain the release of any hostages taken in connection with the conflict. At the same time, it endeavoured to obtain the cooperation of the authorities on both sides in dissuading hostage-takers from pursuing this practice, which is contrary to international humanitarian law and seriously hindered any efforts to resolve the deadlocked situation.

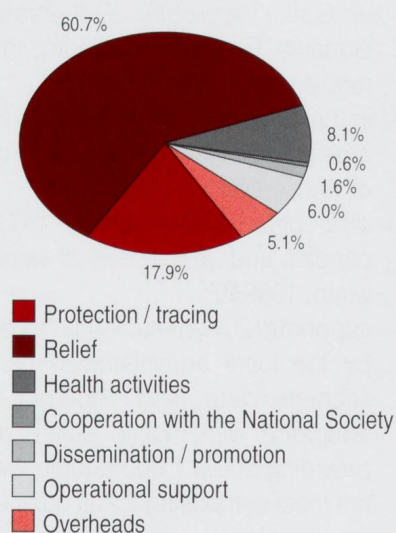
The situation of non-Abkhaz minorities, mainly elderly and isolated Georgians and Russians, was a source of deep concern. Many of them suffered discrimination and even physical violence. Delegates continued to collect and pass on to the Abkhaz authorities allegations of harassment and abuse of such groups. Through its relief programmes for them, the ICRC was able to monitor their conditions at close quarters. However, official pledges made by the authorities to enforce law and order were not always followed by effective action. Although some progress was made on that score in northern Abkhazia, the situation in the south remained worrying, as flaring tensions resulted in frequent security incidents. As in previous years, in cases where people were compelled to give up their homes, the ICRC helped them at their request to join relatives in Russia and Georgia.

In the absence of postal services out of Abkhazia, the ICRC kept up its extensive Red Cross message network. The number of messages exchanged declined somewhat, mainly because of increased mobility of the population and the restoration of some telephone lines. Family reunifications dropped by half, as people were finding it easier to cross the front line. However, the ICRC's protection was still much needed for people who were transferred for security

*improved access  
to detainees*

## GEORGIA

Total expenditure in 1996:  
**Sfr 17,489,950**





## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- conducted visits to some 240 detainees, including about 160 newly registered people, in 18 places of detention in Georgia;
- carried out visits to some 60 detainees in Abkhazia, including about 50 newly registered people, in 10 places of detention.



- forwarded about 89,000 Red Cross messages and organized some 70 family reunifications;
- in December, organized a training seminar for the Ajarian branch of the Georgian Red Cross on activities related to the restoration of family links.



- distributed food parcels, plus 5-10 kg of flour per parcel, to some 70,000 beneficiaries in the towns of Gali, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchira, Gudauta, Gagra and Sukhumi and in rural areas;
- in the summer, provided 51,500 food preservation kits composed of sugar, oil and jar lids;
- distributed 44,764 blankets, 147,242 candles and 35.5 tonnes of wool for winter 1996/97;
- supported 20 community kitchens run by the local administration (seven kitchens were newly opened and equipped with mobile units), daily providing some 7,000 people with a hot meal comprising 2,200 calories;

- supplied 7,900 family parcels and 2,180 individual parcels to 17 of the community kitchens;
- distributed seed and fertilizer to 10 collective farms with a view to purchasing part of the harvest and using it to supply the canteens;
- provided family parcels to be distributed monthly under the Red Cross home care programme to 350 elderly and bedridden patients in Sukhumi town.



- assisted 8 health facilities treating the war-wounded in western Georgia and Abkhazia, enabling some 560 patients to be treated;
- assisted two polyclinics and a dispensary in the Sukhumi district by providing medical supplies and fuel making it possible for polyclinic staff to conduct home visits, enabling some 10,500 consultations to be carried out each quarter.



- fitted 361 patients with 449 new artificial limbs in the Tbilisi and Gagra workshops.



- in May, organized a national seminar in Tbilisi, with the participation of UNESCO, on implementation of humanitarian law;
- regularly gave presentations on humanitarian law for Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian troops stationed on the front lines;
- in December, organized a three-day seminar for cadets at the Military Academy in Tbilisi;
- took part in a 13-hour course on humanitarian law held at the Diplomatic Academy in Tbilisi;
- under the schools programme, distributed more than 63,000 textbooks for sixth-form pupils and handbooks for teachers, mobilizing ICRC trucks to deliver the books to the remotest mountain areas, and held information seminars for teacher trainers in 72 regions;
- produced 10,000 pocket calendars for Abkhazia containing references to humanitarian principles in the local culture and 2,000 similar table calendars for Georgia for distribution to a wide-ranging audience;
- produced video clips on the schools programme and on the prosthetic/orthotic centre in order to heighten the interest of the local media in Red Cross activities.



reasons and could not cross without risk to themselves. Cooperation was initiated with the Georgian Red Cross tracing service, the head of which took part in the regional workshop organized by the Moscow delegation.<sup>2</sup>

Training Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian troops stationed on the front lines in the basics of international humanitarian law remained a priority for the delegates based in Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Workshops were also organized to enhance the communication skills of local and expatriate delegates, enabling them to carry out their protection activities for the civilian population in Abkhazia more effectively.

On another level, contacts with the Georgian Ministry of Defence were pursued with a view to obtaining more systematic instruction in humanitarian law, and ultimately making it an integral part of military training. The head of legal services of the Georgian Ministry of Defence took part in the seminar on the law of war organized by the ICRC in Moscow and became the delegation's liaison officer. He prepared a training programme for the Georgian armed forces and supervised translation of the instructor's teaching file into Georgian.

As the pilot phase had been completed, the schools programme<sup>3</sup> carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education got into full swing. The Abkhaz authorities were approached with a view to obtaining their agreement for the programme to be launched in Abkhazia.

The ICRC pursued its efforts to see international humanitarian law included in the curriculum of the University of Tbilisi and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Talks on humanitarian law were given for university students and lecturers, and university libraries were stocked with reference literature. Cooperation went on with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, which was involved in translating texts on humanitarian law into Georgian. Two members of the University of Tbilisi international law and relations department attended the first Russian-language ICRC training course on humanitarian law in Moscow, and the ICRC subsequently sponsored the participation of another two members in similar courses in Spa, Belgium.

In November an ICRC representative went on a mission to Georgia for discussions with government authorities and representatives of university circles to promote the implementation of humanitarian law. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had begun preparations for an interministerial committee to be set up, and a legal expert from the University of Tbilisi was recruited to carry out a study of Georgian national legislation with a view to facilitating the incorporation of humanitarian law.

The ICRC assisted hospitals treating the war-wounded in western Georgia and Abkhazia, where health facilities still relied mostly on international aid;

<sup>2</sup> See *Moscow regional delegation*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> See *Moscow regional delegation*, p. 196.



however, it was often difficult to distinguish war wounds from injuries received in a shoot-out (wounded people in the Gali region were transferred to Zugdidi hospitals, in western Georgia, by UNOMIG\*). The ICRC also supported medical facilities which organize home care for elderly and disabled people.

The ICRC and the health authorities renewed their cooperation agreement for the two prosthetic/orthotic projects in Tbilisi and Gagra (Abkhazia). The workshops provided artificial limbs free of charge for all amputees in Georgia and Abkhazia, without discrimination. A meeting was held in Tbilisi in October to prepare a three-year training course for local staff employed in the ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic projects in the southern Caucasus.

The ICRC's relief programmes remained focused on Abkhazia, where the regional economy was still paralysed. The entire population was affected, but the hardest-hit were elderly people living in urban areas where they could not grow food for themselves. Most of them were Russian pensioners who had moved to Abkhazia for the warm climate and had no support from relatives abroad. In February, the Russian-Georgian border and the port of Sukhumi were officially closed by presidential decree, and all imports of humanitarian goods became subject to approval by the Georgian government. However, the decrees were not systematically enforced. In October/November the flow of relief goods was interrupted owing to the closure of the bridge between Georgia and Abkhazia before parliamentary elections in the region. Thanks to its permanent contingency stock in Abkhazia, which contains enough supplies for two months, the ICRC did not have to cancel any distributions.

Support was continued for community kitchens run by the local administration and Red Cross. The beneficiaries included elderly people, invalids and families with many children, as well as war veterans and jobless people, most of whom were Russian, followed by Armenians, Georgians, Estonians and Greeks. For 60 per cent of the beneficiaries the canteens were the main or only source of daily nourishment. In cooperation with the local authorities, the ICRC put particular emphasis on improving the quality and the nutritional value of the meals served. With the twofold aim of supplying the community kitchens with fresh products and supporting the local economy, it provided farms in the area with seed and farming implements; in exchange, it received part of the harvest.

The organization continued to keep an eye on the situation of displaced people in the Zugdidi and Tslenjika districts where assistance from other organizations was being phased out, and the situation of civilians in South Ossetia, where it was cooperating closely with *Caritas Denmark*. The central contingency stock of relief supplies for ICRC emergency operations throughout the Caucasus was maintained in Tbilisi.

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\* UNOMIG: United Nations Monitoring and Observation Mission in Georgia



# Central Asia

## TAJIKISTAN




The year 1996 saw a flare-up of the internal armed conflict between government and opposition, despite several extensions of the Tehran cease-fire (concluded in September 1994) and another round of inter-Tajik talks. In the second half of the year opposition forces made significant gains in mountainous central Tajikistan. In a sweeping advance which put them in full control of the middle and upper Garm valley and the Mionadu valley, they took the towns of Tajikabad, Dzhirgatal, Komsomolabad, Garm and Tavildara.

In December, after several postponements, a meeting of the Tajik President and the leader of the United Tajik Opposition finally took place. They signed an agreement aimed at establishing a joint national commission for reconciliation, with wide-ranging powers. However, tension remained high, and security incidents involving the kidnapping of UN observers occurred on the road leading east from Dushanbe, making it extremely difficult to transport urgently needed relief to people trapped in conflict zones. At the end of the year the ICRC was the only organization working in these opposition-held areas.

In northern Tajikistan, which is cut off by mountains from the rest of the country and was not directly involved in the conflict, discontent with the economic and political situation led to frequent demonstrations against the government throughout the year.

In view of the fast deteriorating situation, in May the Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia travelled to the region for discussions with the Tajik authorities. The ICRC subsequently decided to extend a permanent presence to Khorog and Garm. Despite the difficulty of access to the worst crisis spots, it significantly stepped up its assistance to medical facilities treating the war-wounded, striving as it did so to strike a balance between government-run facilities and those under opposition control. The ICRC had



 ICRC regional delegation
  ICRC delegation
  ICRC presence

ICRC / AR 12.96

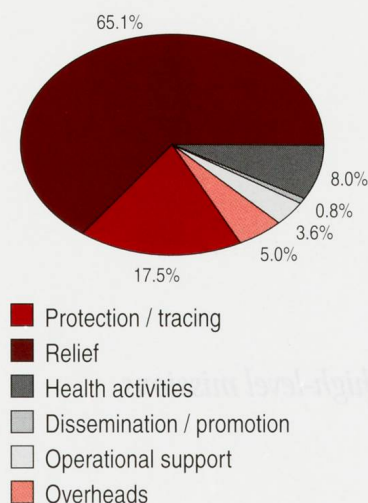
*high-level missions*



## TAJIKISTAN

Total expenditure in 1996:

**Sfr 14,150,271**



been planning to assist displaced people in returning home from the autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan to the southern Hatlon Oblast, which they had fled during earlier phases of the conflict (1992/93). However, as the new hostilities drove more and more people from central Tajikistan to the Dushanbe area, to the west, and Gorno-Badakhshan to the east, taking care of the food needs of the thousands of newly displaced became the priority.

In early December the Delegate General returned to the country and visited the war-ravaged Tavildara region. As during his previous mission, he had contacts with representatives of other countries and international organizations and the Chairman of the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan. He again met the Tajik Minister for Foreign Affairs and other senior government officials, and both the government and the opposition co-chairmen of the Joint Commission established to monitor the Tehran cease-fire. Discussions centred on relief supplies for the displaced; the ICRC's wish to have access to opposition-controlled zones in order to assist the population and visit detainees there; and the need for delegates to be allowed to interview detainees in private, in accordance with the organization's customary procedures, in the course of visits to government prisons. Little progress was made on the last two points: while the ICRC's relief effort was appreciated, its role as a neutral intermediary failed to gain acceptance.

Thus, despite long-running negotiations, the ICRC was still not able to obtain access to all detainees arrested in connection with the hostilities and the ensuing sporadic outbursts of violence that had affected Tajikistan since 1992. The ICRC also made regular approaches to the opposition, seeking permission to visit prisoners held by it; delegates were able to visit, register and assist about one hundred of them after renewed hostilities in the Garm valley in the autumn, and brought news of them to their families. However, several hundred captured government soldiers held in the Tavildara/Mionadu valley remained inaccessible although the opposition had agreed to ICRC visits.

The Joint Commission established to monitor the Tehran cease-fire continued to provide a forum for negotiations between government and opposition. In the Ashkhabad Protocol of 21 July, both parties agreed to release their prisoners simultaneously and specifically requested the ICRC to act as a neutral intermediary in the process. In August the government submitted a list of detainees to be released. However, at the end of the year the rest of the agreement had yet to be put into effect.

While in the south the OSCE was keeping a close watch on the situation of returnees, both internally displaced people who had fled to Gorno-Badakhshan and refugees coming back from Afghanistan, the ICRC focused on the conflict-stricken Tavildara and Garm regions. Protection work was made extremely difficult, and often impossible, as territories frequently changed



hands (as was the case with Tavildara no less than five times). Delegates were often approached by civilians who had suffered harassment and reprisals at the hands of soldiers or opposition fighters. They passed such allegations on to the local authorities, endeavouring to prevail on them to take action to prevent recurrences. As the threat of landmines became evident in the Tavildara region, the ICRC distributed information leaflets to alert the population, in particular internally displaced people returning to the area, to the danger.

For delegates to be able to do their work despite the hostilities, it was essential that combatants and civilians throughout the region should know and accept the ICRC. Earlier efforts to foster contact with commanders of the Tajik armed forces, Russian border guards stationed in the region and the Tajik opposition proved successful in this respect. Cooperation programmes were concluded with the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, paving the way for systematic dissemination of international humanitarian law and training of instructors. Unfortunately, contact in the combat zones was limited after May because of the intense fighting.

Cooperation with the Ministries of Defence and Education continued with a view to introducing humanitarian law into the curricula of military training academies and other higher educational institutions. An official of the Ministry of Defence took part in the ICRC's week-long international seminar on humanitarian law held in Moscow in September. The delegation facilitated the setting up of a working group on implementation of humanitarian law at the advanced military academy of Tajikistan. Working contacts were established with the Tajik State University (the law and journalism faculties), the Institute of Management and Service and the Technical University.

The schools programme<sup>4</sup> carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education completed its pilot phase in Dushanbe. Revision of the teaching materials began with the intention of launching the programme on a large scale.

The renewed hostilities and poor economic conditions played havoc with the health situation in Tajikistan. In summer the World Health Organization had to intervene to control outbreaks of typhoid fever and malaria. Even harder hit than other health services, medical facilities catering for the population in conflict zones lacked staff and supplies. When it had access to these zones, the ICRC transported urgently needed medical materials provided by other humanitarian organizations. The organization, for its part, mostly gave aid to facilities treating the war-wounded. In the course of the year its health staff were increased to cover needs in the Garm area, Gorno-Badakhshan and central and southern Tajikistan, and to carry out the nutritional programme for prisoners. Contingency stocks set up in Garm enabled it to assist hospitals

*promotion of international  
humanitarian law*

*medical supplies  
for local hospitals*

<sup>4</sup> See *Moscow regional delegation*, p. 196.



*assistance to detainees*

treating wounded combatants from both sides, at a time when the hostilities would have made it difficult to bring in supplies from the outside.

Because of the disastrous state of the economy, the country's prison inmates were even worse off than the rest of the population. After an agreement had been signed with the authorities on 7 June, delegates conducted an in-depth survey during which alarming levels of malnutrition and mortality rates were observed. For humanitarian reasons the ICRC thereupon took the exceptional step of launching a nutritional programme in summer 1996 to ensure the survival of the prison population, mostly common-law offenders. This programme, accompanied by distributions of basic medicines and products for personal hygiene, improved conditions in some prisons. While seeing it through the emergency phase and carefully monitoring the situation, the ICRC constantly reminded the authorities of their duty to assume full responsibility for the health of prisoners in their custody.

ICRC relief assistance was given to some 30,000 people who had been displaced or otherwise affected by the hostilities. Some of the displaced were taken in by relatives, but most found only makeshift shelter in schools and mosques. Thanks to its local contingency stocks, the ICRC was rapidly able to begin distributing family parcels and additional flour in the accessible areas, to displaced people in Gorno-Badakhshan (Kalai Khum), southern Tajikistan (Khovaling and Kulyab), the Garm valley and Dushanbe. In September the first of several ICRC convoys carrying relief and medical supplies arrived in Tavildara, which had been cut off from humanitarian aid since May.

*winter relief programmes*

In a race against the onset of winter and the unpredictable military situation, which threatened to make remote areas inaccessible overnight, relief convoys continued to run. Winter stocks were set up in Khorog and Garm. As a result of hostilities, the Tavildara and Darwaz/Sagirdasht regions were again cut off as of November/December; however, distributions in the Garm valley continued. The ICRC stepped up its assistance in Dushanbe as displaced people poured into the capital from upper Darwaz, Tavildara and the lower Garm valley. Monthly assistance continued in the south.

The ICRC had to mobilize substantial human and logistical resources for its relief effort. As a result of the hostilities, convoys were unable to travel direct from Dushanbe to Khorog, but had to make a lengthy detour that involved weaving back and forth across the borders of neighbouring Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. They had to cover 2,500 kilometres at heights of up to 4,300 metres above sea-level, along extremely poor roads. Their progress was also hampered by numerous military checkpoints set up along the way by the government, the opposition and Russian border guards in charge of protecting Tajikistan's external border with countries outside the CIS.



## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- visited 110 detainees held by the Tajik opposition and enabled them to exchange Red Cross messages with their families;

- under a nutritional rehabilitation programme launched in June for some 5,500 detainees in Tajik prisons, provided 240,000 vitamin tablets and essential medicines, plus 165 tonnes of wheat flour, 10.3 tonnes of oil, 112.7 tonnes of beans and rice, 2,196 food parcels, 113 tonnes of high-energy biscuits and milk, plus 1,347 pairs of shoes and 4,357 blankets.



- distributed relief assistance including 1,315.3 tonnes of food and 75.7 tonnes of other supplies, such as blankets, clothes, candles, soap, plastic sheeting, fuel and stoves, to some 30,000 people directly affected by the conflict.



- provided medical and surgical supplies to 8 hospitals and 6 first-aid facilities caring for government soldiers and opposition fighters;
- provided public health facilities for displaced people in 4 localities with medical supplies;
- evacuated 26 psychiatric patients from war-torn Tavildara;



- flew 35 war amputees out of Tajikistan to Baku to be fitted with artificial limbs at

the ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic centre there.



- signed a new cooperation agreement with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan in July and provided training and material assistance in the dissemination of humanitarian law and principles.



- gave 16 presentations on the law of war for officers and soldiers under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and the presidential guards, and assisted in the drafting of training programmes on the same subject for future military instructors of the two Ministries;
- at the request of the Ministries of Defence and Education, prepared humanitarian law curricula for military secondary schools and for military faculties of 6 institutions of higher education;
- in October conducted a first seminar on humanitarian law for senior officers of the Ministry of Security (including Tajik border troops) and for instructors of the Ministry of Security training centre, and gave a presentation on ICRC activities in Tajikistan for more than 100 officials of the Ministry;
- in December organized an introductory seminar on humanitarian law for instructors of the international relations faculty of the Tajik Institute of Management and Service;

- helped prepare a course on humanitarian law which started in autumn 1996 for students at the faculty for military medicine of the Tajik State Medical University;
- published information about the rules for behaviour in combat and the ICRC's mandate in three journals of the Tajik armed forces, the Russian 201st Motor-Rifle Division and the Russian border guards stationed in Tajikistan;
- printed 22,000 booklets with basic information about the organization in both languages to be distributed at checkpoints; and produced video tapes and radio spots in Tajik and Russian and a Tajik language version of *Red Cross and Red Crescent: Portrait of an international Movement*;
- under the schools programme, supplied 5,000 textbooks and 300 manuals to pupils and teachers for a test run which was carried out during the year.



# TASHKENT

## Regional delegation

(Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

Although the four Central Asian republics covered by this regional delegation had to contend with economic and social problems they were not the scene of armed conflict. The delegation in Tashkent therefore focused on preventive activities. An essential aspect of its work was to secure the cooperation of the authorities in promoting knowledge of international humanitarian law, and to assist them in incorporating that law into national legislation. This process was initiated in 1995 in Tashkent with a joint ICRC/UNESCO regional seminar aimed at raising the awareness of the authorities of all five Central Asian republics (including Tajikistan) in this respect. In 1995 and 1996 several follow-up missions were conducted to foster contacts with the government ministries concerned and encourage them to take the necessary measures, such as setting up national committees to deal with the question of implementation. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, bills were being prepared with a view to forming such committees.

Maintaining contact with the authorities, especially in potential crisis spots, also served to prepare the ground for more direct ICRC action in the event of new developments.

### *promotion of humanitarian law*

Dissemination efforts were centred on the armed forces, with the priority of persuading them to make the law of war a compulsory subject in military training; Uzbekistan, for example, seconded a unit to the UN peace-keeping forces, and Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan provided troops for CIS peace-keeping forces in Central Asia in 1996. As in previous years, the delegation organized dissemination sessions in all four republics, ranging from introductory presentations for officers to training seminars for military instructors, mainly from the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. Some encouraging developments took place, especially in Turkmenistan, which became the first country in the former Soviet Union where the ICRC was able to combine humanitarian law and human rights law in its dissemination activities for the armed forces. In June, representatives of the Ministries of Defence of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan took part in the first course on humanitarian law organized by the ICRC delegation in Moscow for CIS member countries.

After studying the public education system in the four republics, the ICRC began work on introducing a schools programme<sup>5</sup> to familiarize children with

<sup>5</sup> See *Moscow regional delegation*, p. 196.



## IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- in June, held the second annual regional seminar in Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan) for dissemination delegates of the five Central Asian National Societies (including the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan);
- in June and October, in cooperation with the National Society, showed a travelling exhibition on the theme *War and Humanity* to more than 5,000 visitors in Uzbekistan;
- supported the National Societies in producing their own dissemination material, including calendars for the Kyrgyz, Kazak and Turkmen National Societies, a brochure for the Kazak Society, and films helping the Kazak and Uzbek Societies to make known their activities in their countries;
- provided training and guidance for the restoration of family links and gave material assistance in the form of office equipment and salaries.



- in December, hosted a training and information seminar for legal specialists from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan who had been entrusted with the task of studying their respective national legislation to facilitate implementation of humanitarian law;
- organized humanitarian law courses lasting two to three days for more than 150 senior army instructors of the Uzbek armed forces, 30 officers of the Turkmen Ministry of the Interior, 30 members of the Republican Guard of Kazakhstan and 180 officers and soldiers of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defence, National Guard and CIS peace-keeping battalion);
- held a five-day workshop on humanitarian law and human rights law for some 30 officers of the Turkmen Ministry of the Interior, with the aim of drafting a code of conduct

- for forces deployed by the Ministry of the Interior in situations of tension and internal strife;
- published 40 press articles and broadcast 34 radio and 9 TV spots on ICRC activities, humanitarian law and the campaign against landmines in all four countries covered by the delegation;
- produced an Uzbek adaptation of the film ICRC 1995 Retrospective which was shown on national TV during peak viewing hours, preceded by an interview with the head of delegation.



Red Cross and Red Crescent values and the basics of humanitarian law. A delegate was newly based in Tashkent exclusively to cover this programme. The first step consisted in selecting individuals from various backgrounds for the future national teams in charge of developing teaching materials. Several presentations were given at schools and after-school centres to take up contact with schoolchildren and teachers. The regional delegation also established links with academic circles and organized talks for university students and teachers, with a view to having humanitarian law included in the syllabus.

None of the four countries had yet signed the UN 1980 Convention prohibiting or restricting the use of certain conventional weapons. Through contact with the authorities and the media the Tashkent delegation made every effort to highlight the dire consequences resulting from the use of anti-personnel landmines and other exploding/lethal devices.

The ICRC supported the National Societies in developing and promoting their activities, especially those to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and restore family links, and helped them to gain a higher profile in their own country. The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan played a very active part in showing the travelling ICRC exhibition *War and Humanity* in Tashkent, Samarkand and Namangan (Ferghana valley). It attracted considerable interest, particularly in the Ferghana valley bordering on Kyrgyzstan where the violent clashes that claimed hundreds of Kyrgyz and Uzbek lives in 1991 were still fresh in people's memories.

The regional delegation networked with other organizations running similar or related programmes in the region. The regional delegate presented the ICRC's mandate and activities at a regional seminar on the management of population movements organized by UNHCR in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and at a seminar for Central Asian countries on human rights organized by the OSCE in Tashkent.



