

Operations

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I. OPERATIONS

This section of the Report begins with the principal operations carried out by the ICRC to assure protection and assistance to the victims of armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (Lebanon, the Israel-Arab conflict, Western Sahara), Africa (Ogaden and southern Africa), Indo-China and Cyprus. Except for the Ogaden conflict, these activities were continuations of work begun in previous years, sometimes as long as ten years ago, as in the case of the Middle East.

This is followed by a chapter describing the activities of the regional delegations of the ICRC, dealing primarily with their work in visiting persons detained for political reasons.

Subsequent chapters are devoted to the services providing support for such operations, the Relief Division, Medical Division and Radiocommunications.

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In 1977, ICRC delegates visited about 400 prisoners of war (mainly from the Ogaden and western Sahara conflicts) and some 3,400 civilian detainees (Israel and the occupied territories).

In addition, in 22 countries, they had access to 244 places of detention in which nearly 14,000 persons were detained for political reasons. In this connection, it is worthy of note that for the first time ICRC delegates visited detainees of this category in Iran. The ICRC also started a large-scale action in Argentina.

The ICRC was involved as well in helping tens of thousands of persons who had fled their native countries and were in transit camps in Africa and south-east Asia. It also enabled 737 Taiwan nationals to leave Viet Nam for Taipei, in five aerial repatriation operations.

In the field of assistance, the ICRC sent relief to some fifty countries, to an overall value of 46.6 million Swiss francs.

Lebanon

After the cease-fire and the arrival of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) in October 1976, relative calm prevailed in Lebanon. This situation led the ICRC—which acts as a relief agency only in periods of emergency—to reduce by stages its assistance activities throughout the country.

On the other hand, despite the Chtaura agreements signed on 30 July 1977 and the cease-fire accepted on 26 September, the southern part of the country continued to be the scene of fighting between hostile groups, especially in the regions of

Marjayoun, Nabatiyeh and Bent Jbeil. The ICRC therefore had to continue and even intensify its relief distribution and medical assistance in this part of the country.

At the same time, the ICRC continued the protective activities undertaken from the beginning of the conflict on behalf of detained and missing persons.

In 1977 the ICRC maintained its delegation in Lebanon which was composed of three sub-delegations, at Beirut, Tripoli and Jounieh, with headquarters in Beirut. The situation in southern Lebanon made it necessary to open a bureau at Tyre in April. On the other hand, the sub-delegation at Limassol, Cyprus, which had been concerned with the forwarding of relief by sea, was closed at the end of June as part of the general reduction in ICRC activities in Lebanon.

At the end of the year, ICRC personnel in Lebanon consisted of 18 delegates and other staff members and 54 locally hired employees.

Relief

MATERIAL ASSISTANCE. — Following the cease-fire which entered into force in October 1976, the needs of the population for material relief were somewhat modified. Furthermore, governmental institutions whose activities had been impeded or even suspended because of the fighting, were able to resume their work in this field. This change in the situation induced the ICRC, which until that time had been distributing a large proportion of the humanitarian assistance provided by the international community for the victims of the events, to review its assistance programme.

A division of labour was worked out among the Lebanese Government High Committee for Relief, the Office for Social Development (OSD), the specialized international agencies and the ICRC, enabling the ICRC to disengage itself to some extent and to transfer its work of delivering and distributing relief to other institutions.

One consequence of this reorganization was the closing, at the end of June, of the sub-delegation at Limassol, Cyprus, from which relief reaching Cyprus from different continents was shipped to Lebanon aboard the "Kalliopi", shuttling between Cyprus and Lebanon. As a reserve for emergencies, however, the ICRC temporarily maintained in Cyprus a stockpile of 367 tons of relief material worth 1.1 million Swiss francs.

The ICRC continued to provide supplementary assistance when necessary, in particular to several thousand persons who had fled their villages due to fighting in the south to take refuge elsewhere in the country, where the OSD assumed responsibility for them, aided by the material assistance of the ICRC.