

Activities of Regional Delegations

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ACTIVITIES OF REGIONAL DELEGATIONS

The ICRC has established regional delegations in Africa (Lomé, Nairobi, and one delegate in Salisbury), in Latin America (Caracas and Buenos Aires) and in Asia (New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur). Two regional delegates are based in Geneva; one covers the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Iran; the other, North Africa.

Unspectacular but vital, the work of the regional delegates requires patience and perseverance. They set up and maintain regular contacts with the authorities, the armed forces and the National Societies—where the latter exist—in the countries they visit. They must follow closely the economic and political developments in the parts of the world that concern them. They make contact with the liberation movements. All their activities, carried out with the support of the National Societies, are guided by the desire to spread knowledge of the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and by the Geneva Conventions. The regional delegates often have to take part in seminars on the Red Cross, usually organized by the League or by the National Societies.

In the event of conflict, this preparatory work allows the ICRC to initiate action for the protection and relief of victims with minimum delay and maximum efficiency.

The regional delegates also attend regional Red Cross conferences and may be called upon to advise newly created National Societies in drafting their statutes.

Finally, the regional delegates perform an important task in protecting and aiding prisoners, especially political detainees.

For example, in 1975, regional delegates made 245 visits to 154 places of detention in 28 countries, and saw, in all, more than 70,000 detainees.

This figure of 70,000 includes prisoners detained for offences under penal law and those held for offences or reasons of a political nature.

The term “political detainee” or “political prisoner”, used for simplicity in this Report, does not in any way affect the status given to them by the detaining authorities. The ICRC does not discuss, either with the authorities or with the prisoners, the reasons for the detention of the persons visited.

The visits made by the delegates—usually accompanied by a doctor delegate—are for purely humanitarian purposes: to inspect the conditions of detention; if necessary, to provide relief to the detainees (medicines, clothing, toilet articles); if appropriate, to suggest to the authorities measures to improve the conditions of detention. The delegates talk freely and without witnesses to the detainees of their choice.

After each visit, the findings are reported to the person in charge of the place of detention, then to his superiors. An official and confidential report is then sent only to the government concerned.

Africa

As part of the regular ICRC missions described above, the regional delegates in Lomé (Republic of Togo) and in Nairobi (Kenya) and the delegate general for Africa travelled to the following countries in 1975: the People's Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey), Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, the Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta, Zaïre.

Visits to places of detention

Not including the Western Sahara (treated separately, see page 8), 98 visits were made to 25 places of detention containing a total of about 7,700 detainees. Below is a list of countries in which detainees were visited. The first figure indicates the number of places of detention visited; the second, the number of persons detained.

Congo-Brazzaville, 1/526; Gambia, 2/246; Liberia, 1/434; Mali, 1/2; Rwanda, 10/5,387; Togo, 7/1,072; Upper Volta, 3/26. In Rwanda, since it had been unable to obtain all the necessary facilities, the ICRC in 1975 cancelled an aid project intended to permit the competent authorities to improve the general conditions of detention in the country's prisons.

Southern Africa

The regional delegate based in Salisbury (Rhodesia) made regular visits, as in previous years, to South Africa. He also travelled to Mozambique and to Angola.

Visits to places of detention

Not including Angola, which is dealt with separately, nineteen visits were made to twelve places of detention, holding in all 1,167 detainees: South Africa, three places, 302 detainees; Rhodesia, nine places, 865 detainees.

Relief

Taking the African continent as a whole, the relief provided by the ICRC to various National Societies, to detainees, and to liberation movements represented an overall value of 223,000 Swiss francs.

The food supplies donated by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation and forwarded by the ICRC reached the value of almost 2 million Swiss francs (see page 27). The recipient countries were Angola, Mozambique and the Western Sahara.

Latin America

In order to lighten the workload of the regional delegation established at Caracas (Venezuela), the ICRC wished to place a delegation in Buenos Aires (Argentina), to cover the southern section (*Cono Sur*) of Latin America.

An agreement for the opening of this delegation was reached in 1975 between the Argentine authorities and the ICRC, and two delegates took up their duties in the Argentine capital during the summer.

Apart from Argentina and Venezuela, the following sixteen countries were visited by the regional delegates and the delegate general for Latin America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.

Various types of aid, chiefly destined for detainees, were granted to thirteen National Societies (in addition to that of Chile), to a total value of 183,000 Swiss francs. The food donated by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation and received by four countries (for details, see table on page 27) was valued at 4.16 million Swiss francs.

Visits to places of detention

Excluding Chile, treated separately (see page 9), the regional delegates visited 96 places of detention in fifteen countries. They saw more than 51,200 detained persons in the course of 107 visits. In the list below, the first figure represents the number of places of detention visited; the second, the number of detainees.

Bolivia, 7/194; Brazil, 30/14,917; Colombia, 2/1,255; Dominican Republic, 2/1,479; Ecuador, 4/2,310; El Salvador, 6/1,678; Guatemala, 6/2,242; Honduras, 3/2,952; Jamaica, 3/432; Mexico, 7/8,009; Nicaragua, 1/515; Panama, 3/1,501; Paraguay, 10/1,642; Peru, 4/3,858; Venezuela, 8/8,221.

Asia-Oceania

At the beginning of 1975, the ICRC delegation in India was raised to the status of regional delegation for the Asian sub-continent and adjacent countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The regional delegate in New Delhi was actively occupied in attending to problems still outstanding in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh since the conflict of 1971 (see page 18), and paid several visits to Islamabad and Dacca. He also visited Burma, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. From September, he was detached from his post and sent to take part in the operation initiated during the conflict in Timor (see page 17).

The ICRC regional delegation for south-east Asia, based in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), was unable to develop its traditional activities in 1975, since, from the spring of that year, the regional

delegate had to take charge of the International Red Cross office opened in Bangkok to deal with the problems arising from the situation in Cambodia and Vietnam.

During the summer, when his successor had just arrived in Kuala Lumpur, the conflict in Timor broke out. The new regional delegate, therefore, was detached from his post in August to head the delegation sent to East Timor.

Singapore and Indonesia were visited in 1975 by the regional delegate. The Philippines were in frequent touch with the ICRC, chiefly on questions relating to relief and to the refugees from Indo-China.

As to relief supplies, about 66,000 Swiss francs were spent in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, to help different programmes. The food provided by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation and forwarded by the ICRC was worth a total of 2.66 million Swiss francs. Five countries were the recipients (for details, see table on page 27).

Visits to places of detention

Excluding Timor, South Vietnam and Cambodia, dealt with separately (see pages 17-18, 10 and 14), the regional delegates were able to visit nine places of detention in three countries, the total number of detainees in all of them being 7,569: Singapore, three places, 49 detainees visited; Sri Lanka, three places, 1,789 detainees; Thailand, three places, 5,731 detainees.

Middle East

The regional delegates and the delegate general for the Middle East travelled to the following countries: Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

In Iraqi Kurdistan (see page 23), the delegates visited 159 Iraqi soldiers held prisoner and organized a relief programme for the victims of the conflict.

In the Yemen Arab Republic, the delegate visited twelve places of detention which held a total of about 2,500 detainees, and was permitted to talk without witnesses to the detainees of his choice. The ICRC donated aid valued at approximately 60,000 Swiss francs as a contribution to the improvement of the conditions of detention and in the form of individual relief.

In the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (where the ICRC closed in 1974 the delegation it had opened in 1967), the ICRC regional delegate had meetings with the authorities, principally concerning the country's accession to the Geneva Conventions.

In the two last-named countries, the value of medical supplies given to the two emerging National Societies totalled about 10,000 Swiss francs. One hundred tons of flour and 20 tons of dried milk were given in 1974 to the "Red Crescent of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen", which distributed it to needy persons during 1975.