

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1967)
Rubrik: Middle East

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 17.11.2024

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

I. EXTERNAL AND PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

1. MIDDLE EAST

Conflict between Israel and the Arab countries

General.—Aware of the increasing tension in the Middle East during the first half of 1967, the ICRC took preparatory measures some ten days before the conflict broke out by sending, on May 25, representatives to Cairo and to Tel Aviv, as well as to Amman, Beirut and Damascus.

On June 7, in fact 48 hours after the opening of hostilities, the ICRC despatched an aircraft bearing the Red Cross emblem to the Middle East carrying five more delegates and medical equipment. Since the end of June, the ICRC had about thirty delegates (not counting local recruitment) distributed in the countries directly concerned with the conflict, namely, in Israel, the United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Apart from the heads of mission of the ICRC, these various missions comprised doctor-delegates, specialists in relief and Agency specialists for tracing and making family inquiries.

It is not easy to draw up a table showing the exact distribution of delegates whose numbers and location varied according to the urgency and importance of each delegation's requirements. The largest numbers, about 15 of these, were in Israel and in the three occupied territories of Syria, Jordan West bank and Gaza-Sinai. The other 15 delegates were distributed between Nicosia, Cairo, Amman, Damascus and Beirut.

The centre of the ICRC's operations was established in neutral country, at Nicosia (Cyprus) from where the aircraft which the ICRC kept permanently on hand for four months could fly rapidly to the different countries concerned. The ICRC delegate general was based on Nicosia with instructions to co-ordinate the whole

arrangement. This post was occupied successively by Mr. Pierre Gaillard from June to September 1967 and by Mr. Pierre Basset from September to the end of November 1967.

The action of the ICRC was naturally carried out from the start on the basis of the 1949 Geneva Conventions which bound all the countries engaged in this war.

On the opening of hostilities, the ICRC notified the governments concerned with the reminder that these four Conventions demand the protection and humane treatment of the wounded and sick, prisoners of war and civilians, as well as respect for medical establishments. The ICRC also requested those governments to transmit to the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva all information as regards the names of captured military personnel and of civilians who might eventually be arrested or interned. Finally, it pointed out that its delegations were charged with organizing with the help of the National Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun Societies and of the Magen David Adom in Israel, practical assistance to all the victims of the conflict without distinction.

Army wounded.—At the outset there was naturally an emergency action to be undertaken on behalf of all the wounded. This consisted above all of the despatching on a large scale by the ICRC aircraft and other special aircraft placed at the ICRC's disposal of blood plasma, bandaging material, surgical appliances and medicines. Thanks to the generosity of many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which also sent medical personnel, this action enabled a large number of lives to be saved. After the cessation of hostilities this was placed under the direct responsibility of the different medical services and the ICRC no longer took part in the work.

The problem of seriously wounded prisoners called for all the ICRC's attention. It negotiated, obtained and effected their repatriation. 260 seriously wounded were thus able to return to their homes in a dozen direct flights from Tel Aviv to Cairo and to Amman in the ICRC aircraft. These flights were the first time liaison was made between the three capitals. Only the wounded who could not be moved were then still in adverse hands. A small number of wounded Jordanian and Egyptian prisoners of war

interned at Atlith were repatriated during the following months. On November 17, the ICRC delegates accompanied 50 Egyptian wounded, released from Atlith camp and conducted them by air to Cairo. These were then the last wounded to be repatriated.

Prisoners of War.—Since the end of the conflict, the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian prisoners of war were interned in Israel in various camps and prisons chiefly in Atlith camp which held 6,120 prisoners of war, in the Djebel-Libni camp (about 50 Egyptian prisoners of war) and in Ramleh prison where there were mostly interned civilian prisoners. On the Arab side, a certain number of Israeli prisoners of war were interned in the Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan.

The ICRC delegates in these different countries have been able, since the end of the war, to visit all these prisoners of war. They have subsequently visited them very regularly, making every effort to ensure that their treatment conforms with the provisions of the Conventions and requesting the authorities to make improvements, if necessary.

The Central Tracing Agency has received lists of information on captives as and when their particulars were obtained and forwarded these on to the different Powers of origin.

By means of its aircraft, the ICRC also ensured the circulation, via Nicosia, of mail between prisoners and their families and the transport of relief parcels, either family or collective, for prisoners and coming from their country of origin, from other countries or from the ICRC itself.

In addition to the various agreements on the exchange of prisoners, which are described below, mention should also be made of efforts undertaken by the ICRC on behalf of Egyptian military personnel who found themselves in distress on the Sinai Peninsula immediately after the conclusion of the cease-fire. The ICRC, in fact, immediately requested that its delegates be authorized to take part in the searching operations and rescue work undertaken by the Israeli authorities. These operations were particularly difficult on account of the vastness of the desert in which the soldiers were in isolated groups and widely dispersed. After obtaining authorization, the ICRC delegates themselves took an active part in searching

for and the regrouping of those who were isolated, covering the ground by helicopter. Finally, nearly 12,000 Egyptian military were able to return home.

Reciprocal Repatriation of Prisoners of War.

a) Between Israel and Jordan.—Since June reciprocal repatriations of prisoners of war were organized between Israel and Jordan, as a result of an agreement signed by the two governments under ICRC auspices.

The first operation took place on June 27 when 425 Jordanian prisoners of war and 3 Iraqi civilians were exchanged for 2 Israeli pilots. In September and October 1967, further repatriations on a smaller scale took place on Allenby Bridge. The ICRC supervised, amongst others, the handing over to Jordan of 42 civilians of Algerian origin, who subsequently returned to their country via Cairo. In December 1967, Jordan handed over to the Israeli Government the body of a pilot who had recently been shot down over its territory.

b) between Israel and Syria.—An exchange of prisoners of war took place on July 17: 361 Syrian prisoners of war and 328 civilians for 1 Israeli prisoner of war and 3 civilians.

On that occasion, the two governments came to an agreement, through the intermediary of the ICRC, for 160 bodies of Syrian soldiers killed and buried in Syrian occupied territory to be exhumed and returned to Syria. For reasons of hygiene this operation was postponed, by common agreement, until June 1968.

c) between Israel and Lebanon.—The exchange took place on August 9, 1967 of 33 Lebanese civilians for 1 Israeli prisoner of war and 4 civilians.

d) between Israel and Egypt.—One Israeli prisoner of war was repatriated in July. However, in spite of innumerable approaches made by the representatives of the ICRC, it was impossible to reach agreement over an exchange before the beginning of 1968.

The ICRC to the aid of refugees and displaced persons.—In Jordan, the military operations led to the exodus of about 200,000 persons

who crossed over to the East bank of the Jordan river. Half of these had already been refugees in 1948. A small number had come from the Gaza Strip.

In Syria, more than 100,000 inhabitants of the Golan Plateau, occupied, fled to the Damascus and Deraa areas.

In view of the extent of these needs, a Red Cross relief action showed itself to be necessary, in addition to the efforts made by UNRWA and various voluntary agencies working in those territories. On June 14, the ICRC addressed an appeal to the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. On June 16, it concluded an agreement with the League of Red Cross Societies by which the latter undertook to co-ordinate assistance in areas where the refugees were under the control of their own government (Jordan and Syria), the ICRC reserving for itself the same task in occupied territories. The International Committee continued, however, to assume this co-ordination during the emergency phase, whilst waiting for the League to be in a position to undertake this work.

The Lebanese Red Cross, which had organized in Beirut the transit of several hundreds of tons of relief arriving by air and by ship, itself financed and ensured, throughout the first emergency period, their transport by truck to Syria and Jordan. Subsequently, the League representative in Beirut took over this important task.

In accordance with the agreement concluded between the League and the ICRC, the League took over from the Committee all Red Cross work on behalf of refugees established on the East bank of the Jordan.

On the other hand, as regards Syria, the ICRC remained solely responsible for the relief action, which it carried out in close co-operation with the Syrian Red Crescent and Government for over 100,000 refugees established in the outskirts of Damascus and Deraa. This action brought a contribution of about 400 tons of food per month, to which were added tents, clothing, blankets, utensils and primus stoves.

However, further aid measures were necessary to support the efforts already made locally by governments and National Societies. The ICRC, in conjunction with the League of Red Cross Societies, undertook, on October 17, 1967, to launch a joint appeal on behalf of the victims of the recent conflict, whether it was a question of

refugees and displaced persons or also of populations in need living in the occupied territories.

It can be estimated that, since the beginning of the conflict, the ICRC, has for its part routed relief supplies to a value of several tens of millions of Swiss francs, provided either from its own stocks, from National Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun Societies and also from numerous other donors, governments, aid societies, voluntary agencies, etc.

Repatriation of refugees.—Once the emergency phase had been passed the problem of the refugees' return home was raised. After many and lengthy negotiations, the ICRC proposed and obtained that the representatives of Jordan and Israel would meet on various occasions, under its auspices, on the Jordan.

In this way an agreement was concluded between the two States concerned in August 1967. This laid down that refugees wishing to return to their country of origin would complete a request form accompanied by an identity document. This form was headed by the emblems of the two States beside that of the ICRC. Once examined by the Israeli authorities which thus reserved for themselves a right of control for security reasons, these forms would enable the persons concerned to recross the Jordan with their families.

The operation which was carried out with the active support of the Jordan Red Crescent and the delegates of the ICRC, came into effect on August 18, 1967. By August 31, the date of expiry set by that agreement for the refugees' crossing, about 14,000 persons had crossed the Jordan river to return to their homes. In view of the irrevocable decision of the Israeli authorities to terminate the operation on that date, the ICRC, in accordance with the resolution adopted at The Hague, addressed an urgent appeal to the Israeli Government requesting it to extend this time limit to enable the return of all those wishing to do so and in all cases of those whose applications had been accepted. The Israeli Government made known its negative answer on October 22, 1967, in a letter from Mr. Eskol, its Prime Minister. He was, however, prepared to arrange for a procedure to be adopted for the reuniting of families. In addition the Israeli authorities decided to give permission to

return to the West bank of the Jordan to refugees who, although holders of a return permit had been prevented from making use of this in time and they agreed to consider the return of special cases. In this way several thousands of persons were able to be repatriated from Jordan proper to the West bank, although there was movement in the opposite direction of a daily average of 100 to 200 Palestinians who, coming from the West bank or from Gaza, crossed the Allenby Bridge into Jordan. On the other hand, the situation at Kuneitra was very different, since the occupation authorities refused practically all permission for repatriation, whether under the form of the reuniting of families or of "hardship cases". The town of Kuneitra which contained a population of about 30,000 inhabitants before the conflict, counted no more than 172 in October 1967 and 120 at the end of December 1967.

In Sinai and Gaza, occupied Egyptian territory, it was possible to repatriate several thousand Palestinians wishing to find their families again which they had left at the time of the conflict. Similarly, a certain number of Egyptians living in Gaza or El Arish were able to go to the UAR.

Civilian populations.—One of the first concerns of the ICRC was to set up sub-delegations in territories under Israeli military control in order to carry out its proper tasks and observe the application of the humanitarian rules. After a certain delay, it obtained authorization to instal representatives in Jerusalem, Gaza and Kuneitra (Syria), who were able to circulate freely and visit various localities in those areas.

The first activity which the ICRC undertook there was to organize the circulation of civilian messages between the members of separated families, prevented from corresponding with each other as a result of the hostilities. This consisted of a printed form comprising two hand-written messages of 25 words, for two-way communications between correspondents. It can be estimated that some 450,000 messages were thus completed. Delayed for a long time their delivery was finally speeded up. At the request of families the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva transmitted about 15,000 messages and opened 3,000 inquiries on individual cases.

On account of the same events, the ICRC had to tackle the problem of the regrouping of families (of which we have already spoken above) in particularly distressing cases. It ensured the transfer in one direction or another of several thousands of persons, essentially of children separated from their parents.

Finally, the delegates concerned themselves particularly in the application in these regions of the Fourth Geneva Convention which must enable the population to resume a normal life on the economic and social level. If the ICRC participated in a limited measure in the action of material relief, its delegates did not fail to point out to the authorities concerned all the distress they encountered. It is, in fact, for the Occupying Power to ensure the normal supplying of territory under its control.

The International Committee organized a system of transferring funds on behalf of a large number of inhabitants living in the occupied territories and who, because of the war, had been deprived of subsidies which relatives, working in various Arab countries, had previously sent them. These transfer facilities were used by several hundreds of persons and functioned satisfactorily.

The Committee's delegates also made contact with the local branches of the Red Crescent established in occupied territory whom they attempted to assist morally and materially. As a result of various representations made to the Israeli authorities, the ICRC obtained recognition by them of branches of the Red Crescent in occupied territory as well as their freedom of action for humanitarian work. Closer co-operation was then initiated between the ICRC delegates and committee members of the local Societies.

Still in the framework of the Fourth Convention, the ICRC received authorization since December 1967 to make regular visits in the occupied territories of the West bank, Kuneitra and Gaza to persons arrested or detained for acts of resistance.

The ICRC also concerned itself with populations which had to abandon their homes or villages destroyed by the Israeli army after the conflict as reprisals for acts of resistance. Various representations were made to authorities by the delegates of the ICRC for this destruction, contrary to the Fourth Convention to cease.

Israeli communities.—Even before the beginning of hostilities, the situation of foreign Israeli communities, stateless or national, established in certain Arab countries was already a cause for concern. The ICRC then made it known to the governments concerned that the provisions of the Fourth Convention should, at least by analogy, apply to these persons from the fact that the measures to which they were subjected were taken in direct relation with the conflict.

In countries in which exceptional measures were taken as regards certain members of the Israeli communities, the ICRC took steps for its delegates to be permitted to visit internees and bring them assistance. Thus in Libya, the ICRC delegate was able to visit persons placed in reception camps and help Israelis who had been permitted to leave the country. In Syria, the ICRC delegates were granted authorization, at the end of 1967, to visit the three Jewish communities established in the country, mainly in Damascus, Aleppo and Kamichli which all consist of nationals. On the other hand, the United Arab Republic refused to permit ICRC delegates to visit interned stateless Israelis. However, detainees were allowed to exchange news with their families and receive relief through the intermediary of the ICRC delegation and the Egyptian Red Crescent. In the months following the conflict, the UAR Government gradually released several dozens of stateless Israelis and these were handed over to the delegates of the ICRC before being directed abroad.

Federation of South Arabia

The ICRC's action in Aden in 1967 was carried out essentially on behalf of political detainees. However, since the end of November, a surgical team was also sent out to ensure, during the emergency period following on independence, the continuation of medical work in the chief hospital establishments denuded with the departure of British doctors, both military and civilian.

Political detainees.—The aggravation of the internal situation in Aden at the beginning of the year had repercussions on the position of detainees. During his sixth visit to persons imprisoned for

security reasons from February 7 to 22, 1967, Mr. Rochat, the delegate of the ICRC, had to observe that, in spite of the comprehension and support he had from the authorities concerned, he still had much to do to obtain any real improvement in detention conditions. He submitted a certain number of recommendations to the attention of the authorities and the Governor of the central prison of Mansura, in particular that the latter should be nearer the men of whom he had charge.

During the course of a seventh visit, from April 24 to May 6, to establishments in which there were about 200 political detainees, Mr. Rochat received further complaints notifying cases of maltreatment. Having seen that the situation was still not satisfactory in Mansura prison, the ICRC delegate, quoting unpleasant facts as a whole, recommended to the authorities as a matter of urgency to re-examine the entire problem and give formal orders to the soldiers forming the guard in order to obtain more flexibility and understanding from them.

This situation and the prospect of the imminent independence of the Federation then led the ICRC to set up a permanent delegation in Aden. On August 21 Mr. Rais, delegate, left for Aden with instructions to concern himself in a regular manner with questions connected with the assistance of detainees. However, on the very eve of independence, in view of the recrudescence of trouble, the ICRC had to further strengthen its delegation and sent out another delegate, Mr. Troyan for that purpose.

In accordance with the formal assurance given the ICRC by the British High Commissioner to release all detainees before the installation of a new government in Aden, the delegates of the ICRC followed these release operations which took place successively in groups of 10 every second or third day.

In mid-November, the ICRC delegates proceeded, in co-operation with the British authorities, to have evacuated to Cairo a group of detainees belonging to the FLOSY movement, in order to ensure their protection. They also escorted the last detainees released by the NLF out of the zone still under British army control.

Medical activity.—When the final British withdrawal from Aden was being prepared, the ICRC's attention was drawn to the

medical situation in the Aden hospitals. Between November 3 and 6 serious incidents had in fact resulted in about one hundred deaths and some 400 wounded.

Therefore at the beginning of November a large convoy of ambulances and lorries, protected by the red cross emblem, went to supply the psychiatric hospital of Selam and collect the wounded left unattended. On November 13 following on a fierce engagement, the delegate again went to the aid of the wounded with a local ambulance.

However, in spite of the effective co-operation of the British authorities the lack of surgeons made itself more and more felt, mainly because of most of them leaving precipitously. The few remaining doctors carried out superhuman work on the spot.

At the authorities' urgent request and to cope, for a limited period, with this emergency situation, the ICRC then decided to send a first team of three surgeons to Aden a few days before the territory acquired independence.

Between November 29 and December 29, these surgeons working in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Kormakshar Beach Hospital carried out about 80 major operations, forty of which were of the utmost urgency, whilst several hundred persons were given surgical treatment.

Yemen

The ICRC's medical activity in North Yemen.—Giving medical assistance to the wounded and sick in the part of the Yemen under Royalist control was the ICRC's main action in that area during 1967.

The ICRC in fact maintained three or four medical teams there, each consisting of a doctor and two male nurses. Their place of work varied according to the medical needs.

This mission's work was, however, rendered extremely difficult by several incidents. First of all there was that of Ketaf in the Jauf in January, when about 120 persons, many of them women and children, were killed as a result of an air raid on the village on January 5, 1967.

As a result of this attack, the ICRC made the following appeal on January 31 to the belligerents:

The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva is extremely concerned about the air-raids against the civilian population and the alleged use of poisonous gas recently in the Yemen and the neighbouring regions.

In view of the suffering thereby caused, the ICRC earnestly appeals to all authorities involved in this conflict for respect in all circumstances of the universally recognized humanitarian rules of international morality and law.

The ICRC depends on the understanding and support of all the powers involved in order to enable its doctors and delegates in the Yemen to continue under the best conditions possible to carry out their work of impartial assistance to the victims of this conflict.

The ICRC takes this opportunity to affirm that, in the interest of the persons in need of its assistance, it has adopted as a general rule to give no publicity to the observations made by its delegates in the exercise of their functions. Nevertheless, these observations are used to back up the appropriate negotiations which it unfailingly undertakes whenever necessary.

A further raid on May 12 having caused 75 deaths, an ICRC medical mission went to give its aid there, after having itself been attacked from the air. On June 2 a report, drawn up by the doctors of the ICRC, was sent to the governments parties to the conflict giving their observations and engaging them in no circumstances to resort to methods of fighting prohibited by the Geneva Protocol of 1925.

Since then, no further incident of this kind has been reported to the ICRC.

At the end of June, one of the ICRC delegates was the victim of a serious accident. Mr. Laurent Vust who was accompanying a consignment of medicines in the aircraft on the Najran-Gizan line was seriously hurt after a crash landing. He was the only survivor and suffering from bad burns. Mr. Vust was still undergoing treatment at the end of December 1967.

Another accident befell this mission. On August 26 an ICRC convoy was ambushed by Bedouins in the Jauf desert. A young

doctor, Dr. Frédéric de Bros was hit by a bullet in the left arm causing an open fracture and resulted in partial paralysis in that limb.

In the autumn, as a result of agreements concluded in Khartoum, the ICRC had, in principle, arranged to terminate its medical action by the end of the year.

However, in December fighting again broke out around Sanaa. Consequently, the medical action had to be continued in the rear of the Royalist positions. After a journey of 600 kilometres on tracks between Najran and Jihanah with all the difficulties involved, an ICRC medical team was installed in the town of Jihanah which worked at night and took cover in a cave during the day. In Jihanah where it expected to find only a small number of wounded, the ICRC team discovered some thirty wounded abandoned and in indescribable conditions of distress of whom about twenty were seriously wounded, most of them women and children, and savagely mutilated.

In such conditions, it can be understood that the task of the ICRC doctors was one of the utmost difficulty, if one adds the fact that medical teams protected by the red cross emblem were twice bombed and attacked during the course of 1967. The courage of their members deserves high praise for risking their lives for others.

Finally, in view of the renewal of the fighting, a second appeal was made by the ICRC in the last days of 1967 to the two parties in conflict for them to respect the fundamental humanitarian principles contained in the Geneva Conventions.

ICRC activity in Sanaa.—Following on negotiations between Mr. André RoCHAT, head of the ICRC delegation, and the Government of the United Arab Republic, the latter agreed at the end of March 1967 to release and evacuate 44 women and children, members of the former ruling house who had been under house arrest in Sanaa since the end of 1962. The ICRC organized their journey via Asmara to Saudi Arabia where the other members of the Royal family were living.

In December 1967, the Government of the Arab Republic of the Yemen sent an urgent appeal to the ICRC for surgeons to go as

soon as possible to Sanaa where the hospitals had suddenly been deprived of the necessary qualified personnel.

To comply with this request, the ICRC immediately made contact with several National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Many of these replied favourably, declaring themselves prepared to place some twenty surgeons for this action at the disposal of the ICRC.

The International Committee, for its part, at once sent out to Aden for Sanaa, a head doctor charged with examining with the Yemeni Government the exact nature of requirements in personnel and medical equipment and co-ordinating the subsequent posting of surgeons supplied by the National Societies.

2. ASIA

Cambodia

The Delegate General of the ICRC for Asia, Mr. André Durand, kept his centre of activity in Phnom-Penh from where he maintained liaison with the Committee's permanent delegations in the neighbouring countries.

He also worked on behalf of Vietnamese refugees and the victims of frontier incidents.

Thus the ICRC has sent out two mobile dispensaries (VW ambulances) to the Cambodian Red Cross which have been placed temporarily at the disposal of the Ministry of Public Health to treat sick refugees. In addition, the Delegate General has handed over a sum of 17,647 frs. to the Cambodian Red Cross to build, under the direction of the Minister of Social Work, an infirmary at Veng Khtum, Battambang Province.

Japan

The repatriation of Koreans residing in Japan and wishing to go to North Korea continued throughout 1967, in accordance with