

Middle East

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): - **(1969)**

PDF erstellt am: **11.09.2024**

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

at ICRC headquarters discussed settlement by payment of a lump sum for some hundred pending cases.

After their first mission to Poland in 1969, Mr. Maunoir and Miss Simonius went to Prague on 17 January. They met representatives of the Czech Red Cross and of the organization concerned for the welfare of former detainees which had compiled files on pseudo-medical experiment victims resident in Czechoslovakia.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Czech organizations concluded in Bonn, on 30 October 1969, an agreement on the payment of a lump sum of 7,500,000 DM for Czechoslovak cases in abeyance. For the first 89 victims whose applications were approved by the doctor-delegate of the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany and by the ICRC doctor-delegate, the sum first paid out, in 1968, amounted to 2,530,000 DM.

5. MIDDLE EAST

The conflict between Israel and the Arab Countries

In 1969, and more particularly during the second half of that year, the situation in the Middle East was characterized by an increase in the number of clashes between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries and by a certain degree of unrest among the civilian inhabitants of the occupied territories on the West Bank of the Jordan and Gaza. As a result, the ICRC found itself obliged to intensify its humanitarian action for prisoners of war and civilian internees in the countries involved in the hostilities, on the one hand, and for civilians in occupied territories, on the other.

In order to carry out these various duties, the ICRC kept up and even strengthened its delegations in Israel and the occupied territories, as well as in the United Arab Republic (UAR), the United Syrian Republic, Jordan and Lebanon. There were 17 delegates in all, besides a big complement of locally-engaged staff.

I. PRISONERS OF WAR

The ICRC carried out its conventional activities for prisoners of war in Israel, the United Arab Republic and Lebanon, the only

countries where prisoners of war were held in 1969. The authorities of the Detaining Powers communicated identities of prisoners to the ICRC, which re-transmitted the names to the Powers of Origin. They were visited by delegates who inquired into their detention conditions, and organized the exchange of mail between prisoners and their families.

In Israel, the capture of more Egyptian and Syrian soldiers (eight Egyptians and seven Syrians) led the ICRC to request the Israel Government's authorization to visit them. The request was granted.

In its turn, the United Arab Republic Government authorized the ICRC to visit three Israeli pilots taken prisoner by the Egyptians.

The first exchange of prisoners between Israel and the United Arab Republic took place on 27 July, when one Israeli and two Egyptian prisoners of war and one Egyptian civilian were repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC.

At the request of the parties concerned, the ICRC used its good offices to arrange for the general repatriation of all prisoners of war. From September onwards, a number of steps were taken to that end, in Geneva, Damascus, Cairo and Tel-Aviv.

On 5 December, the Tel-Aviv authorities handed over to the ICRC 13 Syrian nationals (7 prisoners of war and 6 civilians) detained in Israel. They were repatriated that same day via Kuneitra, under the auspices of the ICRC delegations in Israel and Syria. The Syrian Government in its turn set free the two Israeli civilians detained in Damascus¹ since August 1969, following the hijacking of an American commercial aircraft.

The general exchange of prisoners between Israel and the UAR took place at El-Qantara on the Suez Canal on 6 December. During this operation, conducted by Mr. Jacques Moreillon and Mr. Marcel Boisard, heads of the ICRC delegations in Tel-Aviv and Cairo respectively, two Israeli pilots and 58 Egyptians — six prisoners of war and 52 civilians — were able to return to their own countries.

But, on 14 December, the authorities of the UAR announced that another Israeli had been taken prisoner. On 27 December,

¹ See page 49

Israeli troops captured four Egyptian soldiers, who were visited on 29 and 30 December.

Representatives of the ICRC also arranged for the bodies of Egyptian, Israeli and Syrian soldiers who had fallen in enemy territory to be repatriated.

In Lebanon, at the time of the internal disorders at the end of October, the ICRC delegation at Beirut visited seven wounded Palestinians in the south of the country and two wounded Lebanese soldiers and two Palestinians in Beirut.

ICRC representatives were also able to see 34 Palestinian detainees who had been interned in Lebanon following those events.

During the rest of the year, the Beirut delegation of the ICRC frequently arranged for the repatriation of people who had inadvertently crossed the Israeli-Lebanese frontier. It also provided travel documents for various civilians who had no identification papers and who were anxious to leave the Middle East.

II. DETAINEES AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES

a) **Israel and the occupied territories.**—In 1969, the ICRC in agreement with the Israeli Government, continued its regular visits to detainees and Arab civilian internees in Israel and the occupied territories. ICRC delegates visited 13 places of detention, namely the prisons of Ashkelon, Damoon, Kfar Yona, Neve Tirza, Ramleh and Yagour Jalame, in Israel, the prisons of Jenin, Jericho, Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah and Tulkarem, on the West Bank of the Jordan, and also the prison at Gaza.

They were allowed to talk without witnesses with all detainees, except for those who were still being questioned. By the end of the year, the total number of Arab detainees visited by the ICRC came to about 3,200.

As is customary, these visits were followed by reports, which were transmitted by the ICRC to the Detaining Power authorities and to those of the Power of origin.

The Israeli Government authorized the ICRC to arrange free bus transport for detainees' families who could not afford to go and see their relatives in prison.

After prolonged negotiations, representatives of the ICRC were also allowed to distribute once a month, as from September, standard parcels containing fruit, biscuits and cigarettes to detainees who did not receive visits from their families.

Finally, ICRC delegates were present at several hearings of Arabs brought before Israeli military courts in occupied territories.

b) **Syria.**—On 29 August, a plane belonging to a United States airline proceeding towards Tel-Aviv was diverted to Damascus.

The ICRC at once intervened on behalf of six Israeli passengers on the plane, regarded as being protected persons within the meaning of the IVth Geneva Convention.

On 1 September, three Israeli women, together with the daughter of one of them, were handed over to the ICRC delegation to be taken on to Athens. But, two Israeli nationals still remained interned in Syria.

The representative of the ICRC in Damascus continued to press for the release of these two men and was permitted to visit them on three occasions, to talk to them without witnesses and to forward to them family mail.

Finally, on 5 December, the Syrian authorities handed over the two civilian Israelis to the ICRC who arranged for their transport to Tel-Aviv via Athens.

c) **Palestinian detainees in Switzerland and Greece.**—With the consent of the Swiss authorities, representatives of the ICRC on three occasions visited the Palestinians detained in Canton Zurich for their attack on an El Al aircraft at Zurich-Kloten Airport on 18 February.

The head of the ICRC delegation in Greece also was allowed to visit two Palestinians detained in that country for a similar attack on an aircraft on Athens Airport in the autumn of 1968. At the request of the Greek authorities, the ICRC representative also visited two Jordanians who had attacked El Al's offices in Athens in December, 1969.

III. CIVILIAN POPULATIONS

Application of the Fourth Convention.—In reply to the various efforts undertaken by the ICRC to persuade the Occupying Power

to recognize the application of the IVth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories, the Israeli authorities had declared in the summer of 1968 that they wished to “ keep this question open for the present ”.

Since then, no precise answer has been received by the ICRC as to the definitive principle that has been adopted by the Israeli Government.

Reuniting of families.—a) *United Arab Republic and Gaza-Sinai*: Operations organized under ICRC auspices, for the two-way reuniting of families from and to the United Arab Republic and the occupied territories of Gaza-Sinai, continued during all 1969. Nearly 1,190 persons, originally from the Nile Valley or Gaza, were able to rejoin their families either West of the Suez Canal or in the Gaza Strip respectively, bringing to 5,390 the total number of people who have been repatriated either one way or the other since the beginning of this action.

b) *Syria*: After numerous negotiations, the ICRC received the Israeli Government’s authorization for re-grouping in the region of the occupied Golan Heights a number of families whose members had been displaced in Syria by the war of June 1967.

Between 4 May and 15 June, eight transfer operations took place at Kuneitra, under ICRC auspices, allowing 460 persons to regain their homes.

c) *Jordan*: Arrangements for the reuniting of families between Jordan and the occupied territory on the West Bank of the Jordan were organized by the Occupying Power from the beginning of 1968. ICRC representatives limited themselves to stepping in only in difficult or urgent cases, in order that decisions regarding them should be swiftly taken.

In addition, the delegations of the ICRC at Amman and Gaza repatriated a substantial number of Palestinian children who, because of the war, had crossed over to the East Bank of the Jordan and whose parents had remained in the Gaza Strip.

Similarly, ICRC delegations at Amman and Jerusalem organized the repatriation of handicapped children of Jordanian origin who

were being treated in hospitals on the West Bank of the Jordan, and whose parents had stayed in Amman ever since the June 1967 war.

d) *Central Tracing Agency activities*: During 1969, 260,000 family messages were forwarded by the ICRC to and from Arab countries and the occupied territories. By the end of the year, the total number of messages exchanged since June 1967 reached about 1,260,000.

Since the beginning of hostilities, the ICRC received some 3,600 enquiries concerning missing soldiers and civilians, and was able to provide answers in respect of 3,250 cases brought to its notice.

Assistance to civilian inhabitants in occupied territories.—

a) *Destruction of buildings and expulsions*: In 1969 several houses were destroyed and many persons expelled, contrary to the provisions of the IVth Convention. The ICRC reaffirmed its opposition to such measures, but did not obtain any change in the attitude of the occupying authorities. Its delegates made also many efforts to provide assistance to victims in the form of gifts in kind, and, at the same time, supported their claims for compensation from the Israeli authorities.

b) *Survey of food and health situation*: In December 1968, the ICRC instructed one of its doctor-delegates to inquire into the food and health situation of the civilian inhabitants of the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai. A similar inquiry, embracing also the West Bank of the Jordan, was carried out in June 1969.

ICRC delegates were able to verify that in this field, the occupation authorities were fulfilling their obligations. However, they observed that the number of doctors and nurses was decidedly insufficient. The ICRC therefore approached the Red Crescent Societies and Governments of several Arab countries, so that they should encourage Palestinian doctors to work in the occupied territories. The UAR authorities put up several candidates, whose names the ICRC delegation at Tel-Aviv submitted for approval to the Israel Government.

On 28 June, on the occasion of an operation for the reuniting of families at El-Qantara, seven Palestinian doctors were transferred to the Gaza strip.

At the end of the year, applications from a Palestinian female laboratory assistant and three Palestinian doctors, who had settled in the UAR but who wished to return to Gaza, were being examined by the Israeli authorities.

c) *Action for the Disabled*: In June, the ICRC delegation in Gaza carried out a survey in Gaza and in Northern Sinai in order to discover the number of war disabled cases in need of artificial limbs. It was found that 130 persons would require assistance and that the cost of the equipment would come to nearly 100,000 Swiss francs.

The delegation of the ICRC got in touch with the Magen David Adom (MDA), which agreed to examine disabled cases free of charge and to carry out the functional re-education of the patients after they had been fitted out with artificial limbs. The first cases were examined in November and, by the end of the year, eleven of them were undergoing a medical rehabilitation course.

In the meantime, the ICRC had brought this matter up before the German Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany, which, in December, donated DM 80,000.— to cover equipment costs, as indicated by the ICRC.

Hardship relief.—a) *In occupied territories*: The ICRC continued its distributions of powdered milk to children of needy families and to a number of charitable institutions on the West Bank of the Jordan. Distributions took place once a month in the districts of Nablus, Tulkarem and Jenin, and once every two months in those of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho and Hebron. In most cases, the powdered milk (over 120 tons during 1969) was channelled to the recipients through the Israel “Social Welfare”, in the presence of ICRC delegates.

Delegates also distributed some 1,300 “training gym-suits” to needy families in the Nablus-Jenin area, as well as tents and blankets to victims whose homes had been destroyed.

In Gaza, ICRC delegates investigated the fate of Bedouin inhabitants displaced by the occupying authorities in Northern Sinai. In April, they went, together with representatives from

“ Social Welfare ”, to Salmana and Bir-el-Abd, where 40 tents and a number of blankets were distributed to thirteen tribes. In November, a further distribution of 500 blankets was made to five tribes, who had just been displaced to this sector.

In addition, the delegation of the ICRC in Gaza organized the distribution of 760 tons of food (lentils, sugar, rice, flour, tea and white cheese), carried out by representatives of “ Social Welfare ” and of the American organization CARE, in the presence of ICRC delegates. The number of recipients amounted to some 100,000 people, scattered over the regions of the Gaza strip, and Northern and Central Sinai.

These operations gave ICRC delegates the opportunity to get into contact with the tribes and sheikhs of Central Sinai, and enabled them to gather information on the economic, health and food situation of the inhabitants.

b) *United Arab Republic* : On 25 November, the ICRC sent more than 40 tons of powdered milk to the UAR, to be distributed to several hundred thousand people, who had been displaced because of the conflict and had been transferred mainly to the Liberation Province and along the Nile Valley. Distributions were carried out by the Red Crescent Society of the UAR in collaboration with the national social welfare organizations.

c) *Syria* : In December 1968, the ICRC launched an appeal to several National Societies on behalf of some 100,000 displaced persons living in camps around Damascus. In response to this appeal, more than 170 tons of food (flour, powdered milk, rice and meat), and over 5,000 blankets were handed over to the Syrian Red Crescent.

In the same action, the ICRC despatched to Damascus in January 1969, by air-freight, 18 tons of powdered milk and 3 tons of cheese.

d) *Jordan* : On the occasion of the visit to Jordan in May by Mr. Jacques Freymond, Vice-President of the ICRC, orthopaedic equipment worth 10,000 Swiss francs was handed over to the Red Crescent artificial limb workshop.

IV. JEWISH COMMUNITIES

United Arab Republic.—The ICRC delegation in Cairo provided assistance to families of stateless Jews, where the head of the family was interned. It continued forwarding mail and parcels to Jewish detainees from their relatives abroad, and it also offered to help actively the departure of stateless internees most of whom had already been released and had been able to leave the United Arab Republic, together with their families.

Syria.—With the approval of the authorities, the ICRC representative visited Jewish communities in Damascus, Aleppo and Kamichlie, to enquire into their condition and to provide assistance in a few cases.

Arabian Peninsula

In 1969, the ICRC continued its humanitarian action in the Arabian Peninsula, by providing medical assistance and also aid in the form of food supplies for needy inhabitants. The general delegation at Aden was kept up, with Mr. André Rochat at its head.

I. THE YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC

Action in Northern Yemen.—At the beginning of 1969, the situation in those areas of Northern Yemen held by various Royalist tribes changed considerably, particularly in the region of Jihannah where the ICRC had set up a field medical outpost in December 1967. As it had become impossible to ensure the provisioning and safety of its surgical team, the ICRC decided on 8 January 1969 to withdraw it. The two surgeons at Jihannah returned to Switzerland, while the three male nurses were sent to Najran, the ICRC operational base in Northern Yemen, with the object of opening there a dispensary for the inhabitants.

In April, this medical team organized a mobile polyclinic at Bir-Al-Khadra, a gathering point for large numbers of Northern Yemenites. Two male nurses made bi-weekly trips between Najran and Bir-Al-Khadra, treating some 200 cases every time. This assistance was brought to an end in mid-June after the departure of the Northern Yemen tribes.

The ICRC, however, carried on with the dispensary at Najran, where one male nurse was kept on. He did some excellent work, as 100 to 150 cases a day were treated by him alone. His action ended on 21 September, at which date the ICRC decided to withdraw its medical mission in Northern Yemen after more than six years activity in that area.

ICRC action for the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic.

—Following a fresh outbreak of fighting around Sana'a and the difficulties that its inhabitants were experiencing in obtaining food supplies, the ICRC had decided, at the end of 1968, to undertake an emergency action on behalf of needy children in the capital. On 12 November, a gift from the Swiss Confederation, consisting of some ten tons of powdered milk and cheese, was despatched by the ICRC to the capital aboard a Red Cross aircraft which was available at the time.

As the situation continued to be serious, a further consignment of ten tons of milk products was sent by air on 24 January 1969, and forty tons more were shipped by sea and arrived at the Yemen Arab Republic in mid-February.

The distribution programme was drawn up by the ICRC delegation at Sana'a in co-operation with the Yemen Government assisted by ICRC delegates and it continued until the end of October.

Some 6,000 people, mostly schoolchildren and hospital patients in the capital, received aid in this particular action. Nearly four tons of milk were also distributed to schools at Khamer, Umran and Sa'ada, three towns in the northern part of the country.

At the end of September, the Government of the Yemen Arab Republic requested the ICRC for assistance in a new emergency. Drought in several provinces had aggravated seriously the food situation of the inhabitants, who had already been sorely tried after several years of conflict.

On 24 October, the ICRC despatched to Sana'a five tons of milk products from its stock at Aden. Four tons were delivered to the hospitals in the capital, and one ton sent to Sa'ada to meet the most urgent needs.

In order to study the situation on the spot, Mr. Rochat visited the Yemen Arab Republic from 3 to 6 November. He found there

was a real emergency situation, especially in the zone around Sa'ada, where fighting was still going on. A large number of wounded and sick remained without any care because of lack of medical personnel and equipment and of the difficulties encountered in evacuating them to hospitals. In Sana'a itself, the shortage of medicaments made it difficult to tend the wounded.

On 22 November, the ICRC sent, for the inhabitants of Sa'ada, by special plane, a consignment consisting of seven tons of powdered milk, three tons of cheese, 400 blankets, 400 sheets, and medicaments and dressings for a value of about 200,000 Swiss francs.

On 27 November, a second consignment of medicaments was despatched, this time for the Sana'a hospitals.

Towards the end of the year, it was decided to send to Sa'ada a surgical team, which set itself up there at the beginning of 1970.

II. PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF SOUTHERN YEMEN

Medical Assistance.—a) *Aden*: In November 1967, on the eve of the independence of the People's Republic of Southern Yemen, the ICRC had sent a surgical team to Aden, in order to make up for the shortage of medical personnel, following the departure of the British Forces.

The new Government found it impossible to set up its own health services, and the ICRC continued its emergency action during 1968 and 1969, thanks to the co-operation of several National Societies, which offered to provide the necessary personnel.

In 1969, three surgical teams successively operated at the Al-Gamhouriah Hospital in Aden: the first one from November to the end of April 1969 sent by the Romanian Red Cross; then from April to November, by the Bulgarian Red Cross, and, lastly, from the end of November, a team sent by the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. Each of these teams consisted of two surgeons and a doctor-anaesthetist.

The ICRC mission, directed by Mr. Isler, received additional assistance from an Italian neuro-surgeon, who offered to work voluntarily for the ICRC during his holidays, from July to September.

By way of example, the Bulgarian team performed 2,450 major operations during the seven months it spent in the capital of Southern Yemen, and tended 5,690 cases at the polyclinic.

b) *Mukallah*: The lack of qualified medical staff led to a critical situation in the interior, where most hospitals found themselves without surgeons and doctors. The wounded, especially those from the troubled areas, had to be carried back to Aden, without having received any care at all, sometimes travelling for twelve days over tracks that were barely passable. The ICRC therefore decided to set up a surgical mission also at Mukallah, capital of Hadramaut, with only one hospital for a population of about 400,000.

From 15 April to 18 December, three Swiss surgeons successively operated at Mukallah hospital, where they took over not only the work of the surgeon's ward, but also that of the polyclinic. They performed in all more than 670 operations, and were assisted by a Swiss anaesthetist-nurse who stayed on at Mukallah over the whole of this period.

The splendid work carried out by the two surgeons of the Bulgarian team in Aden must also be mentioned. During one month, after the departure of the second Swiss surgeon and before his successor arrived, they went in turn to Mukallah, in order to ensure the continuation of hospital operations.

c) *War disabled*: On 22 April, the ICRC sent to Aden 20 wheelchairs for Yemeni disabled. A further 20 and one hundred pairs of crutches were sent by special plane, on 25 July.

Aid to needy inhabitants.—In view of the prevailing disorders and of the very serious economic situation faced by the country, the ICRC decided, in February, to carry out a food relief operation for the poorer inhabitants of Aden and its surroundings.

In April and May, it sent by ship and by special plane 20 tons of milk products (powdered milk and cheese) to the local Red Crescent Society, which, although not yet recognized, was already active. Distributions, carried out by the Red Crescent, together with the ICRC delegation, began on 1 June.

Two further air consignments, each consisting of ten tons of powdered milk, in July and August, made it possible to carry

on this action during the whole year. Powdered milk rations were handed out every month to over one thousand families in the capital; these represented about 8,500 persons, including some 400 infants. In addition, ICRC delegates personally arranged daily distributions of prepared milk to some 250 children in one of Aden's poorer quarters.

About 200 people, belonging to needy families of political detainees, also received food relief from the ICRC, in the form of regular allowances of rice, sugar, tea and milk.

Political detainees.—On 30 April, Mr. Rochat visited Crater central prison at Aden and, between 3 and 13 May, Mansoura prison.

Following these visits, the ICRC decided to carry out an action in favour of political detainees. Some 200 locally-purchased mattresses and blankets were distributed to them.

Iraq—Iran

In the spring of 1969, following a disagreement between these two countries about the Shott-el-Arab, many Iranian nationals established in Iraq were expelled and sent back to their own country. This meant that a number of Iranian families were dispersed in Iran and Iraq.

The ICRC Delegate-General for the Middle East got in touch with the Iranian authorities and the leaders of the Red Lion and Sun at Teheran from 12 to 24 June; after that, he went to Baghdad, between 3 and 26 August, and drew up a programme, together with the Iraqi authorities, with the object of facilitating the reuniting of dispersed families in Iraq.

This agreement included the setting-up of a delegation of the ICRC in Baghdad. Mr. Daniel, assisted at first by Mr. Joyet from 20 September and then, 3 months later, by Mr. Jean Ott, was appointed to the task.

The ICRC representatives conducted various negotiations at Baghdad and Teheran, in order to establish the practical details of plans for reuniting families.

On 22 October, they were able to arrange for 47 Iranian nationals to be transferred to Iraq. A similar operation, involving 47 other persons, took place on 25 December.

6. SPECIAL SERVICES

Central Tracing Agency (Geneva)

In 1969 the Central Tracing Agency received 55,032 queries and communications of various kinds (54,783 in 1968) and despatched a total of 54,747 letters (54,227 in 1969). During the same year it transmitted 15,010 messages and instituted 10,715 enquiries through National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICRC Delegations and various official bodies. The Agency was able to close 11,301 of its files; 4,970 of them with a positive result.

These figures clearly indicate that the ICRC's work in this sector had not declined by comparison with the volume of work in the previous year. Nevertheless, the number of family messages forwarded through the Agency was lower than that which, in order to save time, ICRC Delegations on the spot transmitted direct, i.e. not through Geneva.

The Agency co-operated in the setting up in the field of registration and tracing offices organized in keeping with its own methods. At the beginning of November 1969 one of the Agency's staff went to Athens to start a card index system at the ICRC Delegation, for registration of political detainees whom delegates visit periodically, and needy families in need of assistance.

At the same time another member of the Agency staff was delegated to the Nigerian Red Cross in Lagos, which desired to develop and reorganize its Tracing Service.

Needless to say, during the year under review, the Central Tracing Agency was called upon to discharge the many tasks arising from current conflicts, particularly the recording of military prisoners taken in Nigeria by the federal or secessionist troops, and of members of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam taken prisoner by the South Vietnamese and American forces.