

Middle East

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I. OPERATIONS

Middle East

Conflict between Israel and Arab countries

In 1973, the ICRC continued the action started during the 1967 war for prisoners of war, civilian internees and detainees, and other civilian victims of the Israelo-Arab conflict. It maintained delegations in Israel and the occupied territories, in the Arab Republic of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. In the field it had twenty-five delegates and a large locally recruited staff.

In October the resumption of hostilities compelled the ICRC to increase its activities considerably. These are described on pp. 10 ff.

PRISONERS OF WAR

The ICRC continued to render assistance to prisoners of war in Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

ICRC delegates made regular visits, on average twice a month, to prisoners with whom they were able to talk privately. In Syria, however, they did not have access to places of detention despite the approaches made and the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention of 1949.

During the visits, the delegates provided prisoners with books, games, food and cigarettes. They inquired about their personal needs and transmitted family mail.

The ICRC reminded the governments concerned that, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Third Geneva Convention, all the prisoners of war—some of whom had been held for months or even years—must be repatriated.

On 2 April and 31 May, under Articles 109 and 110 of the Third Convention, the Israeli authorities allowed two Egyptian prisoners of war to be repatriated owing to their state of health.

The ICRC repeatedly approached the Egyptian Government regarding the repatriation of an Israeli prisoner of war who had

not fully recovered from wounds received in action when captured in December 1969. He was finally repatriated in November.

The ICRC efforts since June 1972 for the repatriation of Syrian and Lebanese prisoners of war in Israel and Israeli prisoners of war in Syria were successful; on 3 June 1973 all were repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC.

Egyptian prisoners of war in Israel and Israeli prisoners of war in Egypt, who had been captured during the war of attrition on the banks of the Suez Canal, were repatriated in November 1973 under ICRC auspices.

ICRC ACTION IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Despite further ICRC approaches, the Israeli authorities maintained their stand that the question of the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in occupied territories should be left open, allowing the ICRC to exercise its activities on an empirical basis.

The ICRC therefore tried to ensure, from one case to another, as thorough an implementation as possible of the provisions of the Fourth Convention. Thus in various fields facilities granted by the Israeli authorities enabled the delegates, as in the past, to aid the victims of the conflict.

In other cases, however, owing to Israel's stand, the ICRC failed to obtain satisfaction. The ICRC can only deplore a situation which deprives the victims of full protection and of their rights under the Fourth Convention.

Civilian detainees and internees

Civilian detainees from occupied territories and Arab countries: ICRC delegates continued to visit some 2,700 Arab civilian detainees in fourteen places of detention in Israel and occupied territories. Once a month they visited six places of detention in the occupied territories, and every other month eight places of detention in Israel. The visits were covered by reports which the ICRC sent to the Detaining Power and to the detainees' own government.

Although the Israeli authorities, owing to their stand in the matter of the applicability of the Fourth Convention, did not consider

themselves bound by the provisions of that Convention, they nevertheless agreed to inform the ICRC of the names of the nationals of Arab countries or occupied territories who had been detained by the army or the police for eighteen days pending their investigation.

At the end of the period of interrogation, limited in principle to one month from the date of arrest, such prisoners—whether security or penal law cases, whether in preventive custody, charged or sentenced—were seen and interviewed by ICRC delegates without witnesses.

The delegates approached the Israeli authorities regarding various matters connected with detention conditions.

In the medical field, they supplied dentures, artificial limbs, spectacles, etc.

They recommended more workshops and study courses in places of detention, and continued to provide the requisite books (more than 4,000), copy-books and pens.

The Israeli authorities complied to a large extent with the ICRC's recommendations.

The ICRC delegates continued their monthly distribution of parcels to those detainees who had received no family visits. The number of parcels totalled approximately 6,000.

As it had done in the past, the ICRC made transport arrangements to enable families to visit prisons. It organized and to a large extent financed more than 600 bus trips for about 25,000 relatives of detainees.

The ICRC delegates organized the repatriation of a number of civilian detainees to neighbouring Arab countries after making sure that they were, in fact, returning of their own free will.

Reuniting of families

The ICRC delegates continued their endeavours to reunite families separated by the 1967 war.

Arab Republic of Egypt and Gaza-Sinai: In 1973, eight family reuniting operations between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the occupied territories of Gaza and Sinai were organized under the auspices of the ICRC, enabling 338 persons from Egypt to join their

families in the Gaza Strip and Sinai, and 397 from the Gaza Strip and Sinai to join their people in Egypt.

These operations also allowed 616 persons in the Gaza Strip and Sinai to visit their folk in Egypt and to return to Gaza and Sinai, and 612 in Egypt to go to the Gaza Strip and Sinai and to return to Egypt.

Lebanon and occupied territories: In 1973, the ICRC made arrangements for the transfer via Beirut of forty-four persons from the Gaza Strip who wanted to join their families in an Arab country not adjacent to Israel.

Syria and the Golan Heights: In 1973, three persons were able to join their families on the occupied Golan Heights, in the course of two operations at Quneitra (Ahmedia) conducted under the auspices of the ICRC.

Jordan and the West Bank: As in previous years, the ICRC's action was confined to endorsing, on humanitarian grounds, applications which the Israeli authorities had not approved under the normal procedure. During 1973, thirty-five families benefited under the "hardship" procedure. As the proportion of acceptances remained low (41.7 per cent), the ICRC made several appeals to the competent authorities in view of the precarious position of the families concerned.

Student travel

Arab Republic of Egypt and Gaza Strip: Students attending Egyptian universities and who had permission to join their families in Gaza during the holidays or on completing their studies crossed the canal under the auspices of the ICRC. From 16 to 31 July, in seven operations via El Qantara, 2,542 students returned to Gaza for the summer holidays. From 5 September to 3 October, five operations allowed 1,336 of these students to return to Egypt. The October hostilities prevented the departure of the others.

Expulsions

Although no expulsion measures had been reported to the ICRC since July 1972, the Israeli authorities on 10 December 1973 ordered the expulsion of eight persons from the West Bank. These persons

talked to ICRC delegates in Jordan. The ICRC delegation in Israel approached the authorities with a view to securing permission for them to return to their families in occupied territory.

Destruction of houses

The plight of those victimized by the Israel army's destruction of houses in occupied territory was a matter of continued concern for the ICRC, which regards the practice as being contrary to the provisions of Articles 33 and 53 of the Fourth Convention.

A number of houses were destroyed in 1973, leaving many people homeless in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank of the Jordan.

ICRC delegates approached the Israeli authorities in an effort to persuade them to refrain from such action; they also rendered aid to the victims.

RELIEF OPERATIONS FOR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND FOR DISPLACED PERSONS IN ARAB COUNTRIES

Under its relief programmes, the ICRC shipped 2,000 tons of flour at the end of December 1972, and 30 tons of powdered milk in February 1973, for distribution to the needy population of the West Bank.

The supplies which the ICRC sent for displaced persons in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are shown on pages 59 and 60 of this report.

Jordan: With 20,000 Jordan dinars left over from the 1970 Jordan relief action, the ICRC delegation at Amman, in agreement with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Interior, drew up a programme for the construction of an annex to the Jordan Rehabilitation Centre for amputees. Work started at the beginning of the year and ended in December.

LIBYAN AIRCRAFT BROUGHT DOWN IN THE SINAI

On 21 February 1973, a Libyan Airlines plane was brought down in the Sinai by Israeli military aircraft.

At the official request of the Libyan Government, the ICRC delegation offered the Government of Israel its services as a neutral intermediary.

In the course of several operations over the Suez Canal, under the auspices of the ICRC, the mortal remains of 102 victims were transferred to the Arab Republic of Egypt. Objects found in the wreckage were also transferred to Egypt.

ICRC delegates and doctor-delegates made several visits to the survivors in the Beersheba and Jerusalem hospitals in Israel. Their report was transmitted simultaneously to the Libyan and Israeli authorities, and they transferred two survivors to Egypt and one to Jordan.

EVENTS IN LEBANON

The fighting which broke out on 2 May 1973 between Lebanese armed forces and Palestinian resistance movements created a situation which called for ICRC action to ensure protection and assistance for the victims. Two delegates therefore proceeded to Beirut to strengthen the ICRC delegation in Lebanon.

On 3 May, after contacting both parties, the ICRC delegates secured a two-hour ceasefire, which enabled them to enter a Palestinian refugee camp and evacuate the seriously wounded, in a convoy of Lebanese Red Cross and "Palestinian Red Crescent" ambulances. The operations were repeated on the following days.

On 18 May, the ICRC sent a doctor-delegate to Beirut to assess medical conditions in Palestinian refugee camps.

ICRC ACTIVITIES DURING AND FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR

On the resumption of hostilities, the ICRC called upon the parties to the conflict to remember their obligations under the four Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The ICRC being already well represented on the spot, and active on behalf of the victims of the 1967 conflict, in occupied territory in particular, it was able immediately to extend its action to further victims.

Having noted and deplored the fact that the parties to the conflict sometimes failed to apply the Geneva Conventions completely, the ICRC solemnly reminded them on several occasions of their obligation to do so. That failure, whether it was in the form of reprisals or in a resolve to link humanitarian problems with political and military considerations, deprived wounded men or prisoners of the basic protection and assistance afforded by the Conventions, which were not subject to any condition of reciprocity.

Besides its urgent appeals, owing to the gravity of the situation the ICRC was compelled to adopt various measures.

In view of the highly disturbing reports of fighting and its effect on the civilian population, the ICRC asked the parties, on 11 October 1973, to give effect to three articles of the draft Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions on the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, in anticipation of their adoption by the Diplomatic Conference in February 1974. Two governments—that of the Syrian Arab Republic on 12 October and that of Iraq on 16 October—made favourable response. In a reply dated 18 October, the Arab Republic of Egypt agreed provided there was reciprocity. Lastly, on 19 October, Israel sent a reply which the ICRC considered negative.

In view of the numerous allegations by all parties to the conflict of violations of the Conventions, the ICRC proposed that joint commissions of inquiry should be established—in accordance with Article 52 of the First Convention, Article 53 of the Second, Article 132 of the Third, and Article 149 of the Fourth—in order that the facts might be ascertained and further violations prevented. The proposal was published in a press release issued on 13 December. By 31 December no answer had been received. Despite serious difficulties, the ICRC did all it could to ensure that its action should extend to the largest possible number of victims.

Action for the wounded and the sick

As the armed forces on both sides sustained heavy casualties, the ICRC carried out several operations to afford relief.

On 26 October, it transported 200 litres of blood plasma and 200 litres of fresh blood to the field hospital of an Egyptian unit which had none. The operation was repeated on 28 October.

The ICRC subsequently supplied the Suez hospital several times with medicaments, oxygen cylinders, medical equipment, blankets and clothing.

In the course of three operations—which were delayed owing to the obstacles raised by the Israeli authorities who linked the problem of the Suez wounded with the problem of Israeli prisoners of war in Egypt—the ICRC evacuated to Cairo more than 1,600 wounded and sick who could not be given care in the Suez hospital.

Action for prisoners of war

From the beginning of hostilities, the ICRC urged all parties to the conflict to send in prisoner-of-war capture cards within the shortest possible time, and to allow it to visit places of detention in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Third Convention.

On 10 October, preliminary lists of prisoners of war in Israeli hands reached the ICRC delegation. The delegates made thirteen visits to all able-bodied Arab prisoners of war held in three places of detention and to all the wounded receiving care in three different hospitals.

The first notifications regarding Israeli prisoners of war in Egyptian hands, including fifty-one wounded men visited by ICRC delegates, reached the ICRC between 15 October and 4 November 1973. The full list of Israeli prisoners of war held by the Egyptians was supplied on 14 November 1973. All prisoners were seen shortly before repatriation, which started on 15 November.

An agreement was, in fact, concluded between Israel and Egypt on 14 November for the repatriation of all prisoners of war on both sides. Under the auspices of the ICRC, repatriation operations by means of four aircraft provided by the Swiss Government were carried out from 15 to 22 November, enabling 8,300 Egyptian prisoners of war, including 440 wounded, and three Iraqi prisoners of war, to go to Egypt, and 241 Israeli prisoners of war, including forty-seven wounded, to return to Israel. Seventy-one flights were necessary for the transport of prisoners of war from Tel Aviv to Cairo and from Cairo to Tel Aviv.

The capture of two Israeli pilots by the Lebanese armed forces was notified on 12 October 1973. The ICRC delegate in Beirut visited them three times.

The Syrian authorities had, by 31 December 1973, sent no notification regarding Israeli prisoners of war, nor had they allowed the ICRC delegates to start visits, despite treaty provisions and all the approaches made by the ICRC. The ICRC deplores the fact that its delegates did not have access to those prisoners of war, whose number it did not know. Owing to this situation, the ICRC had no assurance as to whether the prisoners had the benefit of the protection and the rights provided under the Third Convention.

On 31 December, Israel held 384 Syrian prisoners of war, ten Iraqi prisoners of war, six Moroccan prisoners of war, and sixty-seven Egyptian prisoners of war, captured after the end of the repatriation operations. In Syria there was an undetermined number of Israeli prisoners of war.

Activities of the Central Tracing Agency

With the outbreak of hostilities in October 1973, the Agency's bureaux, which had for several years been operating in the Cairo, Tel Aviv and Amman delegations, assumed their traditional function of transmitting to the Agency in Geneva lists of prisoners of war and repatriates, registering and relaying inquiries about civilians and soldiers missing during or following the conflict (approximately 1,200), exchanging messages (approximately 15,000) and reuniting families.

At the outset of the conflict, the Agency opened a bureau at Damascus, directed by a delegate sent from Agency headquarters, but by the end of 1973 it had been able to do no more than register inquiries.

Action in newly occupied territories

Through its representative in the United Nations, the Government of Israel, on 26 October, pledged itself to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention in occupied territories. That position was confirmed to the head of the ICRC delegation in Israel by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

By 31 December 1973, however, the Israeli authorities had not yet authorized the ICRC delegates to proceed to the newly occupied Syrian territory on the Golan Heights, where they were to start work. Thus they were unable to verify whether the population of that territory had the benefit of the provisions of the Fourth Convention.

On the other hand, they were able to go into occupied Egyptian territory on the west bank of the Suez Canal, where they freely moved about and talked with the inhabitants.

The delegates made sure that there was a regular supply of food and drinking water. On their second visit they were accompanied by a doctor-delegate, who ascertained the health conditions prevailing in the territory.

* * *

The various operations described above were carried out after numerous approaches had been made by the ICRC, both through diplomatic missions in Geneva and through its delegates in the field.

The ICRC delegate to international organizations, who was in New York, regularly informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other officials of the work done by the ICRC.

He was asked to make numerous approaches to the representatives of the belligerent States in support of those made in Geneva. He frequently informed the members of the Security Council of the action carried out by the ICRC, and headquarters of the decisions of the Security Council.

Relief action in the countries parties to the conflict

When hostilities were resumed in October 1973, the ICRC received many requests for assistance from the States involved in the conflict. A relief operation was promptly organized and an appeal to National Societies and Governments launched. In response to its various appeals, the ICRC received approximately three million Swiss francs' worth of donations in kind, mainly in the form of medicaments, surgical instruments and equipment, tents, blankets, ambulances and other items (see tables below).

The donations in kind to the ICRC were either supplied direct to the delegations concerned or to Geneva, from where they were sent to the Middle East in aircraft provided by the Swiss Government.

To cope with the increased treaty duties which it had already had to carry out before the resumption of hostilities, plus the further duties laid upon it by the more recent conflict, the ICRC made the following arrangements to strengthen its personnel.

Opening of an ICRC delegation at Nicosia (advanced base) with:
one head of delegation responsible for co-ordinating action in the different operational areas; one relief/administration delegate; one radio operator.

Strengthening of existing delegations by assigning:

- (a) to Cairo, two delegates for treaty duties, one doctor-delegate, one radio operator;
- (b) to Damascus, one delegate for treaty duties, one relief delegate, one delegate of the Central Tracing Agency, one radio operator;
- (c) to Beirut, one relief delegate, one radio operator, two technicians and one nurse for the possible setting up of the field hospital in stock at Beirut.

Operation for the repatriation of prisoners of war between the Arab Republic of Egypt and Israel:

The operation called for the following supplementary personnel: two doctor-delegates and four nurses (on board aircraft for the repatriation of wounded prisoners of war), one aircraft co-ordinator based at Tel Aviv, and four aircraft: one DC 6, one DC 9 and two DC 8 with their respective crews (namely about seventy-five persons). In seventy-one flights between Cairo and Tel Aviv, 8,541 prisoners of war, including 487 wounded, were repatriated in eight days.

Strengthening of personnel at Headquarters:

One officer responsible for liaison with Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, one officer responsible for the recruiting of personnel, one delegate for treaty duties, one relief/logistics delegate, three secretaries.

In putting this supplementary structure into service, the ICRC had co-operation from the Finnish Red Cross (one doctor and one nurse); the Danish Red Cross (two technicians), and the Netherlands Red Cross (one Red Cross and Red Crescent liaison officer).

To cover Middle East operational costs and in response to a general appeal launched on 20 October, the ICRC received cash contributions amounting to approximately 6 million Swiss francs (see tables below).

DONATIONS IN KIND FROM NATIONAL SOCIETIES

TABLE I
(as at 31.12.73)

National Societies	Blankets	Tents	Medicaments	Miscellaneous	Swiss francs
American Red Cross .	10,000		270 kg		187,600.—
Australian Red Cross .			51 kg		48,000.—
Austrian Red Cross . .	1,000		5,498 kg		127,300.—
Belgian Red Cross . . .			1,370 kg		77,400.—
British Red Cross . . .		130	498 kg		102,400.—
Danish Red Cross . . .			3,122 kg	25 wheel chairs	192,900.—
Finnish Red Cross . . .			868 kg		47,000.—
French Red Cross . . .	200		1,089 kg	1,000 kg powdered milk	42,100.—
German Red Cross (Federal Republic) .			6,791 kg	4,500 kg clothing	880,300.—
Luxembourg Red Cross			360 kg		9,000.—
Monaco Red Cross . . .			20 kg		700.—
Netherlands Red Cross	2,750		4,476 kg	10,000 kg powdered milk	228,300.—
New Zealand Red Cross				1 Land Rover	8,000.—
Norwegian Red Cross .			98 kg		6,000.—
Spanish Red Cross . . .			570 kg		48,000.—
Swedish Red Cross . . .	2,000	200	18,434 kg	2 ambulances	560,700.—
Swiss Red Cross		100	12,832 kg		222,900.—
ICRC			17,000 kg		259,200.—
	15,950	430	73,347 kg		3,047,800.—

The donations in kind were distributed as follows:

Syria

22,234 kg of medicaments and surgical equipment;
430 tents;
14,035 blankets;
1,000 kg of powdered milk.

Total value: Sw. Fr. 1,136,600.—.

Egypt

35,068 kg of medicaments and surgical equipment;
4,000 kg of powdered milk;
1,375 blankets;
4,500 kg of clothing;
25 wheel chairs;
1 ambulance.

Total value: Sw. Fr. 1,276,200.—.

Israel

6,354 kg of medicaments and surgical equipment;
1 ambulance.

Total value: Sw. Fr. 237,500.—.

Lebanon ("Palestinian Red Cross")

4,400 kg of medicaments and various medical supplies.

Total value: Sw. Fr. 80,000.—.

STORES STILL HELD IN BEIRUT

5,291 kg of medicaments and surgical equipment;
6,000 kg of powdered milk;
1 Land Rover.

Total value: Sw. Fr. 317,500.—.

TABLE II

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR MIDDLE EAST OPERATIONS

(as at 31.12.1973)

Receipts*National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*

Australia	10,267.—	
Canada	50,000.—	
Denmark	110,095.—	
Germany, Federal Republic of .	125,250.—	
Greece	36,500.—	
Haiti	1,575.—	
Honduras	450.—	
Ireland	11,026.—	
Liechtenstein	7,000.—	
Luxembourg	3,000.—	
Monaco	7,120.—	
Netherlands	72,375.—	
New Zealand	22,000.—	
Norway	10,000.—	
Philippines	4,725.—	
South Africa	11,256.—	
Sweden	220,000.—	
Thailand	763.—	
United States of America . . .	75,000.—	
		778,402.—

Governments

Abu Dhabi (UAE)	315,000.—	
Australia	115,825.—	
Botswana	942.—	
Canada	157,250.—	
Denmark	133,837.—	
Japan	3,000,000.—	
Netherlands	174,135.—	
Norway	280,000.—	
United Kingdom	324,000.—	
United States of America . . .	630,000.—	5,130,989.—

Total received

<i>Individuals</i>	7,499.—	5,916,890.—
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Contribution promised*Government*

Italy		100,000.—
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Total received / promised **6,016,890.—**