

# Activities of the regional delegations

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## Cyprus

During 1976, i.e. two years after the cessation of hostilities on the island, the ICRC still maintained a delegation (three delegates) in Cyprus.

Since August 1974 the island has been divided into two sectors, one in the south, under Greek-Cypriot control, the other in the north, controlled by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities. The two zones are separated by what is known as the Green Line.

The ICRC delegates have provided aid for some thousands of Greek-Cypriots living in the north and for this reason has maintained regular contact with them and with the Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot authorities. They also arranged for the exchange, across the Green Line, of family messages between Greek-Cypriot villagers in the north and their relatives in the south, and have remained in regular contact with the Greek-Cypriot authorities.

Moreover, in order to reinforce representations made in Cyprus itself, the delegate-general for Europe and the head of the Cyprus delegation went to Ankara in June to see members of the Turkish Government in order to inform them of the ICRC's concern regarding the difficulties encountered by the Greek-Cypriot population in Karpasia.

Relief supplies were provided again in 1976 by the ICRC, as follows:

- supply to Turkish-Cypriot authorities of medicine difficult to obtain in northern Cyprus;
- financing of aid sent by the Cyprus Red Cross to Greek-Cypriots living in the north;
- help in purchasing household goods and bedding for displaced persons in the south;

The ICRC also gave financial support to the tracing operations of the Cyprus Red Cross.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE REGIONAL DELEGATIONS

The ICRC has established regional delegations in Africa (Lomé, Nairobi), in Latin America (Caracas, Buenos Aires), and in Asia (New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur). There are also regional delegates, based on Geneva, who cover the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Iran, North Africa, Europe, and North America.

Through their regular contacts with governments and National Red Cross Societies in the countries visited, and even with liberation movements, the regional delegates carry on many types of activity.

In the first place, they perform much work for the protection and assistance of prisoners, especially those detained for political reasons. In 1976, the regional delegates visited 146 places of

detention in nineteen countries, the total number of detainees being more than 67,000; about 4,600 of these were "political" detainees. In fact, in many countries the authorities do not separate penal law prisoners from political detainees.

In the present Report, the term "political detainee" is used for simplification, not because the ICRC intends to judge the prisoners' status according to the detaining authorities' criteria.

The visits had a purely humanitarian aim: to inspect the conditions of detention; to provide aid for the prisoners if required (see p. 31); and, where necessary, to suggest to the authorities measures for the improvement of detention conditions. To ensure a balanced survey, the regional delegates are usually accompanied by doctor-delegates, and they talk to the prisoners without witnesses.

After the visit has been made, the delegates report their observations to the person in charge of the place of detention, then to his superiors. Lastly, an official report, confidential in nature, is sent by the ICRC only to the government concerned.

The regional delegates are also interested in the activities of the National Societies, which the ICRC supports as much as it can afford (see p. 31).

Finally, they take part in the efforts being made by the ICRC to spread knowledge of fundamental Red Cross principles and of the Geneva Conventions. To accomplish this, they establish contacts with the Ministries of Defence, Education and Health, and with the country's universities, in order to distribute the ICRC publications produced for the armed forces and for schools, and to organize courses or give lectures on international humanitarian law. The regional delegates are often called on to participate in seminars on the subject of the Red Cross, especially those organized by the League or by National Societies.

In the event of conflict, this preparatory work, in collaboration with the National Societies, makes it possible for the ICRC to launch without delay and with maximum effectiveness its operations of protection and assistance.

## Africa

As part of the regular missions of the ICRC as described above, the regional delegates based on Lomé (Togo) and Nairobi (Kenya), and the delegate general for Africa, paid visits to the following countries (apart from Togo and Kenya) in the course of 1976: Benin, Burundi, Cape Verde Islands, Congo, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, French territory of the Afars and the Issas (TFAI), Uganda, Upper Volta and Zaire.

Aid to the value of 22,000 Swiss francs was given by the ICRC to support the operations of various National Societies in West and East Africa. The Somali Red Crescent also received 10 tons of milk and 50 tons of flour donated by the Swiss Confederation and valued at 127,000 Swiss francs (see tables on p. 30).

## Visits to places of detention

The delegates visited places of detention:

- in Uganda, 20 places, about 6,420 prisoners
- in Burundi, 8 places, about 1,740 prisoners
- in TFAI, 1 place, about 250 prisoners, some 15 of whom were “political detainees”.

In Uganda and Burundi, the ICRC based the visits on an approach different from that adopted for the other countries mentioned in this chapter: the visits covered all the places of detention in the country. In the course of the visits, the delegates provided material aid to prisoners, to a value of 75,500 Swiss francs (see table on p. 31).

Upper Volta. — In Upper Volta, the regional delegate last March visited seven civilian internees from Mali, held in the civil prison of Ouagadougou since the frontier dispute between Upper Volta and Mali in December 1974. These internees were repatriated to Mali in July 1976. The ICRC visited them five times and made representations for their release.

Ethiopia. — Because of the conflict opposing the two Eritrean liberation movements—the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the People’s Liberation Front (PLF)—and the Ethiopian Government, the regional delegates made several visits to Ethiopia in 1976. The purpose of the visits was to maintain contact with the Ethiopian Red Cross and the Government of Ethiopia, and to repeat the ICRC’s offer of protection and assistance to victims of the events. The ICRC had made several representations to the Ethiopian Government, especially to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as follows:

- in December 1974, when the President of the provisional Revolutionary Administrative Council gave an audience to the ICRC regional delegate for Africa;
- in January, February and May 1975, when ICRC delegates were able to undertake missions to Addis Ababa.

It did so again in January, July, August, September and November 1976, during similar missions.

Nevertheless, at the end of 1976 none of these attempts had been successful and the ICRC delegates had been unable to go to Eritrea.

The two Eritrean movements kept in touch with the ICRC to give details of the suffering of the civilian victims of the conflict and to ask for help in the form of medicines, food and clothing.

To bring aid to these people, the ELF created an “Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent Society”. Although it has not officially recognized the Society, the ICRC has maintained *de facto* relations as is customary in similar circumstances, using it as an agent to distribute relief to persons suffering as a result of the war. The ICRC has also used the “Eritrean Relief Association”, a humanitarian body created by the PLF, for the same purpose.

Thanks to the support of several National Societies, the ICRC sent to Eritrea in 1976:

- 3 tons of medicines and surgical equipment,
- 260 tons of food,
- 6 tons of clothing.

During each mission to Ethiopia, the ICRC delegates repeated their offer of services for visits to “political” detainees, to whom the International Committee had access in 1974. The offers were never taken up.

The Eritrean liberation movements informed the ICRC that they too held a number of prisoners.

## Latin America

Of the two regional delegates based on Caracas, one covers the Andean countries and the other Central America and the Caribbean. The regional delegation in Buenos Aires is responsible for the “southern cone”. Both delegations have carried on their activities throughout 1976. Apart from Argentina and Venezuela, the following countries were visited during the year by the regional delegates and the delegate general for Latin America:<sup>1</sup> Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Guyana. In addition, the delegate general went at the beginning of the year to Cuba, which is covered directly from Geneva. He was received by representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Health and by the leaders of the Cuban Red Cross.

The delegate responsible for Central America and the Caribbean was replaced at the end of June. The new regional delegate undertook a tour of introduction and contact in the autumn, visiting the Bahamas, Haiti, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

Aid of various kinds, chiefly intended for detainees, was supplied to eight National Societies (in addition to the Chilean Red Cross), to a total value of 69,400 Swiss francs. Food was supplied by the EEC and the Swiss Confederation to aid seven countries (details in table on page 30); its value was 5,453,000 Swiss francs.

### Visits to places of detention

In addition to Chile, dealt with separately (see page 23), the ICRC delegates visited places of detention in nine countries. The total number of visits made was 86, the number of places of detention 75, and the total number of prisoners 53,650:

- *Bolivia*: 7 places, about 790 prisoners, of whom approximately 170 “political”

<sup>1</sup> The missions by the ICRC President in Latin America are described on pp. 23, 26 and 41.

- *Colombia*: 11 places, about 15,350 prisoners, of whom approximately 70 “political”
- *Dominican Republic*: 2 places, about 1,740 prisoners, of whom approximately 120 “political”
- *Haiti*: 1 place, about 870 prisoners, of whom 6 “political”
- *Mexico*: 24 places, about 16,170 prisoners, of whom approximately 350 “political”
- *Paraguay*: 4 places, about 1,940 prisoners, of whom approximately 370 “political”
- *Peru*: 13 places, about 6,620 prisoners, of whom approximately 100 “political”
- *Uruguay*: 5 places, about 2,530 prisoners, of whom approximately 1,780 “political”
- *Venezuela*: 8 places, about 7,640 prisoners, of whom approximately 110 “political”

With respect to *Uruguay*, the ICRC wishes to state that its delegates, during their mission in April 1976, were authorized to visit four places of detention and a military hospital. In contrast with the usual custom, the delegates were unable to talk without witness to the detainees of their choice. The ICRC accepted this restriction exceptionally, in the hope that its submission might facilitate the resumption of visits to places of detention in *Uruguay*, suspended in 1974.

In December 1976, the President of the ICRC had talks in Montevideo with the Uruguayan President and members of the Junta of Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. These men opposed the continuance of the ICRC's activities in their country.

On the other hand, when the President of the ICRC visited *Argentina* in the same month, he received an assurance from the authorities that, from the beginning of 1977, the International Committee would be authorized to organize a programme of protection and assistance for detainees.

## South-East Asia

The ICRC maintained its South-East Asia regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur. In May and June the new delegate general and the regional delegate for Asia and Oceania went together to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Timor and the Philippines.

Their mission was to survey ICRC activities in the region (of the Bangkok delegation and Kuala Lumpur regional delegation) and to make contact—the first for the new delegate general—with government authorities and National Societies and to confer with them on a number of problems relating to ICRC protection and assistance.

The matters dealt with were:

In *Thailand*: negotiation of a regional headquarters agreement with the authorities. This agreement came into force in November and laid down the functions of the ICRC delegation

in Bangkok (assistance to Indo-China refugees in Thailand)<sup>1</sup> and of the regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur (conventional activities of regional delegations).

In *Malaysia* and *Singapore*: general review with government ministries of ICRC protection and assistance activities. In Singapore they visited places of detention, as mentioned below.

In *Indonesia*: discussions with the authorities and National Red Cross to determine the needs of the *East Timor* population and to arrange a programme for food assistance to be provided by the EEC. However, the data gleaned in Jakarta and Dili were inadequate to plan a programme. The trip to Dili was the first that ICRC representatives had been able to make to the island of Timor since December 1975.

In the *Philippines*: continuation of ICRC protection and assistance. Assistance provided by the ICRC included, apart from various kinds of relief to the National Society, food donated by the Swiss Confederation and by the EEC to a value of 905,000 Swiss francs (see tables on p. 30). This relief was intended for civilians displaced by the events on Mindanao.

### Visits to places of detention

The regional delegate visited thirty-one places of detention in four countries, where he saw a total of 3,095 prisoners:

- *Malaysia*: 6 places, 1,210 prisoners including 450 political detainees.
- *Philippines*: 18 places, 1,790 prisoners, including 170 political detainees
- *Singapore*: 5 places, 86 political detainees
- *Thailand*: 2 places, 9 political detainees

During visits to places of detention in the Philippines the regional delegate was accompanied by a second delegate from Geneva. They provided prisoners with relief supplies valued at 15,000 Swiss francs.

## Asian Sub-Continent

In September 1975 the regional delegate for the Asian Sub-Continent and the adjacent countries had been detached from his base and assigned to the action in Timor. The ICRC sent another regional delegate to New Delhi at the beginning of April 1976.

The new regional delegate went several times to Bangladesh and Pakistan to supervise the work being carried out by the ICRC offices at Dacca and Rawalpindi.

<sup>1</sup> Until the end of the year, activities in Thailand for the benefit of Indo-China refugees were the responsibility of INDSEC. Subsequent to the regional headquarters agreement they were taken over by the ICRC alone, on 1 January 1977.

At the beginning of the year the ICRC closed its Dacca and Islamabad delegations, but maintained offices in Dacca and Rawalpindi. These were manned by locally recruited staff in order to attend to outstanding cases to be dealt with by the Pakistan authorities.

There were problems of two kinds inherited from the 1971 conflict:

- the transfer from Bangladesh to Pakistan of people who, under the New Delhi Agreements of 28 August 1973, had been granted the authorizations required to emigrate but who had not been able to depart before the end of the transfer operations in July 1974 and had since then not been able to pay their fares;
- appeals and repatriation of people who, having been refused entry into Pakistan, were entitled to appeal under the New Delhi Agreements of 8 April 1974.

At the end of the year there were still 1,700 appeals awaiting decision by the Pakistan authorities to whom, in 1974 and 1975, the ICRC had submitted about 30,000 applications.

In all, the number of people entitled to migrate to Pakistan was estimated at 15,000.

Of that number, 643 who could afford the fare left Bangladesh for Pakistan in 1976. As in previous years, the ICRC issued travel documents.

The ICRC transferred seven people from India to Pakistan. They had unlawfully entered India from Bangladesh and had been arrested before reaching Pakistan. The plight of such people was distressing, inasmuch as no country recognized them as its nationals.

The regional delegate also went to Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka he visited three places of detention in which there were some 1,200 prisoners, including 300 political detainees. Relief valued at 7,200 Swiss francs was delivered to the prisoners.

## Europe

### Portugal

In February/March and May/June the ICRC regional delegate visited six places of detention and a penitentiary hospital in Portugal.

The number of political detainees visited during the first mission was 431. At the time of the second mission there remained 28; the others had been released.

With the Government's agreement and the National Society's help, the ICRC continued its assistance to the more needy families of detainees. The cost of this programme amounted to 31,500 francs during the year.

## Middle East

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Middle East countries in which the ICRC has no permanent delegation are covered by a regional delegate from Geneva.

He and the general delegate for the Middle East, and other ICRC officials, went to the Yemen Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

In the *Yemen Arab Republic*, where the ICRC had access to places of detention, the regional delegate visited two places of detention in which there were some 300 prisoners, about fifty of whom were political detainees. The previous year the regional delegate had visited twelve places of detention.

The ICRC continued providing material assistance to all prisoners. This aid, to a value of 21,600 Swiss francs, consisted mainly of the regular provision of drugs prescribed by a visiting doctor.

In February and September the ICRC repatriated from Ho Chi Minh City 130 nationals of the Yemen Arab Republic. The regional delegate was on the spot to co-operate with the newly formed National Red Crescent in the reception of the repatriates. The ICRC donated 30,000 Swiss francs to the National Society for distribution among the repatriated families.

In the *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen*, where he went twice, the delegate discussed with the authorities and leaders of the new Red Crescent Society a number of topics, including the country's accession to the Geneva Conventions.

He also met several times representatives of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman who authorized the ICRC to transmit family messages to an Iranian prisoner held by the Front.

The ICRC sent the new National Society 100 tons of flour donated by the Swiss Confederation and 5,400 Swiss francs worth of medical supplies for the Dhofar refugees (see table on p. 31).

In *Kuwait* and in *Saudi Arabia* the delegates conferred with the authorities on the ICRC work of protection and assistance in Lebanon.

## OPERATIONS SUPPORT SERVICES

### Relief supplies

The tables in the following pages show the work of the ICRC in forwarding to 48 countries relief supplies to a value of 71.9 million Swiss francs.

In *actions financed by special funds* (see below), some of which were undertaken by the ICRC alone (Angola, Chile, Cyprus, Lebanon, Western Sahara) and others jointly by the ICRC and the League (Indo-China), or with the support of governments, National Societies or various organizations, the value of relief supplies of all kinds sent either by the ICRC or by donors under ICRC supervision came to 37.2 million Swiss francs.