

Field operations

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Field operations

With an average of 590 staff working in 48 delegations (about 440 delegates and nearly 150 posts occupied by staff seconded by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and some 4,000 locally recruited employees, in 1989 the ICRC was active in almost 90 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East — taking into account the countries covered from its various regional delegations — providing protection and assistance for the victims of armed conflict and internal disturbances and tension.

Activities for people deprived of their freedom

In 1989, ICRC delegates visited prisoners of war and so-called “security detainees” in 839 places of detention in 45 countries (*for details, see the countries/conflicts concerned later in this chapter*). The purpose of these visits is purely humanitarian; ICRC delegates observe the material and psychological conditions of detention and the treatment accorded to prisoners, provide detainees with relief supplies if required (medicines, clothing, toilet articles) and, if necessary, ask the authorities to take steps to improve the detainees’ treatment and living conditions.

The ICRC visits places of detention providing its delegates are allowed:

- to see all the detainees and talk freely to them without witnesses;
- to have access to all premises used for detention;
- to repeat their visits.

In addition, the ICRC generally asks for a list of the persons to be visited or for permission to draw up such a list during the visit and to distribute material assistance to needy detainees and their families.

Before and after these visits, discussions at various levels are held with the people in charge of the detention centres. Confidential reports are then drawn up. In the case of internal disturbances or tension, these reports are sent only to the detaining authorities, while in the case of international armed conflict they are sent both to the Detaining Power and to the Power of Origin of the prisoners of war or civilian internees. These confidential reports are not intended for publication. The ICRC, for its part, confines itself to publishing the number and names of the places visited, the dates of the visits and the number of people seen. It also mentions the fact that its delegates were able

to talk to the prisoners without witnesses. It does not express an opinion on the grounds for detention and does not publicly comment on the material or psychological conditions it finds. If a government should publish incomplete or inaccurate versions of ICRC reports, the ICRC reserves the right to publish and circulate them in full.

Central Tracing Agency

The Central Tracing Agency (CTA) of the ICRC continued to carry out its tasks arising both from its treaty obligations towards civilian and military victims of armed conflicts and from the exercise by the ICRC of its right to take the humanitarian initiative in situations not covered by international humanitarian law.

It will be recalled that the CTA and its delegates in the field are mainly concerned with the following tasks:

- obtaining, registering, collating and, when necessary, forwarding information about people helped by the ICRC, such as prisoners of war, civilian internees, detainees, displaced persons and refugees;
- re-establishing contact between separated family members, particularly by forwarding family messages when there are no normal means of communication or these have been interrupted by the conflict;
- tracing persons reported missing or whose relatives are without news;
- arranging for family reunifications, transfers (of particularly vulnerable groups, for example) to safe places, and repatriations;
- issuing, on request, written attestations for former detainees and prisoners of war certifying that they were held, or were sick, wounded or hospitalized while in captivity; drawing up death certificates so that family entitlements to pensions or compensation can be claimed;
- issuing ICRC travel documents on the basis of statements made by applicants who, owing to the upheavals caused by conflicts, have no identity papers or passports. Such documents are valid for one journey only.

All these activities undertaken in Geneva and in the field are carried out in co-operation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a large number of which have their own tracing services.

Statistics for the overall activities of the CTA in 1989, both at Geneva headquarters and in the field, are as follows:

- 1,468,184 Red Cross messages were exchanged, 1,330,939 of them in relation to the conflict between Iran and Iraq;
- 56,070 requests for tracing missing persons were processed, of which 33,857 were successfully concluded, and 700,476 items of information were registered concerning prisoners of war, civilian internees, security detainees, displaced persons and refugees;
- 45,823 certificates of captivity, sickness, death, etc. were issued;
- 609 separated family members were reunited and 791 people repatriated;

The CTA continued to handle cases relating to past conflicts, in particular the Second World War.

Medical and material relief

In 1989 the ICRC purchased and sent directly to the scene of action 23,193 tonnes of relief supplies (not counting medical items) for a value of 26.7 million Swiss francs. In addition, 20,357 tonnes (worth 37.6 million Swiss francs) were made available by donors as contributions in kind. A total of 43,550 tonnes of relief worth 64.3 million Swiss francs was thus dispatched by the ICRC to 45 countries in 1989. Medical assistance came to 19.6 million Swiss francs.

While the total value of medical and other supplies bought or received and dispatched in 1989 was 84.1 million Swiss francs, the amount actually distributed during the year was 36,000 tonnes of non-medical relief supplies worth 51.9 million Swiss francs and medical relief worth 19.1 million Swiss francs.

The total value of medical and other relief supplies distributed by the ICRC in 1989, i.e., 71 million Swiss francs, was divided geographically as follows:

	<i>(Swiss francs)</i>	
Africa	25,103,998	35.37%
Latin America	4,909,532	6.92%
Asia and the Pacific	7,918,402	11.15%
Europe (Romania)	21,779,896	30.68%
Middle East and North Africa	11,276,122	15.88%
TOTAL	70,987,950	100%

(See pages 37, 55, 84, 98, 105 for detailed tables)

Medical and other assistance for detainees and their families, included in the above figures of relief distributed, cost 6,353,684 Swiss francs and amounted to more than 1,721 tonnes of relief supplies.

To facilitate the on-site distribution of relief, several donor countries (USA, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Belgium) and the EEC also provided the ICRC with wide-bodied aircraft. The value of these contributions in kind is included in the pink pages, Table IV, under contributions in cash and/or kind.

Throughout the year, moreover, the ICRC sent several hundred medical and paramedical personnel (doctors, surgeons, male and female nurses, physiotherapists, prosthetists, nutritionists, public health specialists and medical administrators) to take part in activities in various parts of the world. Of these, 393 were seconded to the ICRC by the National Societies of 21 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States. Sixteen of these National Societies, plus that of Portugal, also provided the ICRC with logistic staff (relief administrators, warehouse and ground transport managers, relief and flight co-ordinators, mechanics, builders, etc.) who took part in field relief operations.

It should be remembered that the ICRC undertakes material and medical aid programmes only in cases of armed conflict and internal disturbances and tension, and only providing it can:

- carry out on-the-spot checks on the urgency of the victims' needs;
- make local surveys to identify the categories and numbers of people requiring assistance;
- organize and supervise relief distributions.

The figures quoted above represent only part of the cost of aid programmes as they appear in the budgets and financial reports for each operation. Such operations also involve very substantial expenditure on personnel, equipment, vehicles, transport, storage, etc. The total cost appears in the tables showing the breakdown of expenditure in 1989 according to type of activity (*pink pages, Table III*).

AFRICA

- 1. South Africa
- 2. Angola
- 3. Ethiopia
- 4. Kenya
Regional delegation covering Kenya, Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tanzania.
- 5. Mozambique
- 6. Namibia
- 7. Nigeria
Regional delegation covering Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- 8. Uganda
- 9. Senegal
Regional delegation covering Senegal, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali.
- 10. Somalia
- 11. Sudan
- 12. Chad
- 13. Togo
Regional delegation covering Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger.
- 14. Zaire
Regional delegation covering Zaire, Burundi, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.
- 15. Zimbabwe
Regional delegation covering Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia.

LATIN AMERICA

- 16. Argentina
Regional delegation covering Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.
- 17. Chile
- 18. Colombia
Regional delegation covering Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela.
- 19. Costa Rica
Regional delegation covering Costa Rica, Belize, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic and the other countries of the Caribbean.
- 20. El Salvador
- 21. Guatemala
- 22. Honduras
- 23. Nicaragua
- 24. Peru

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

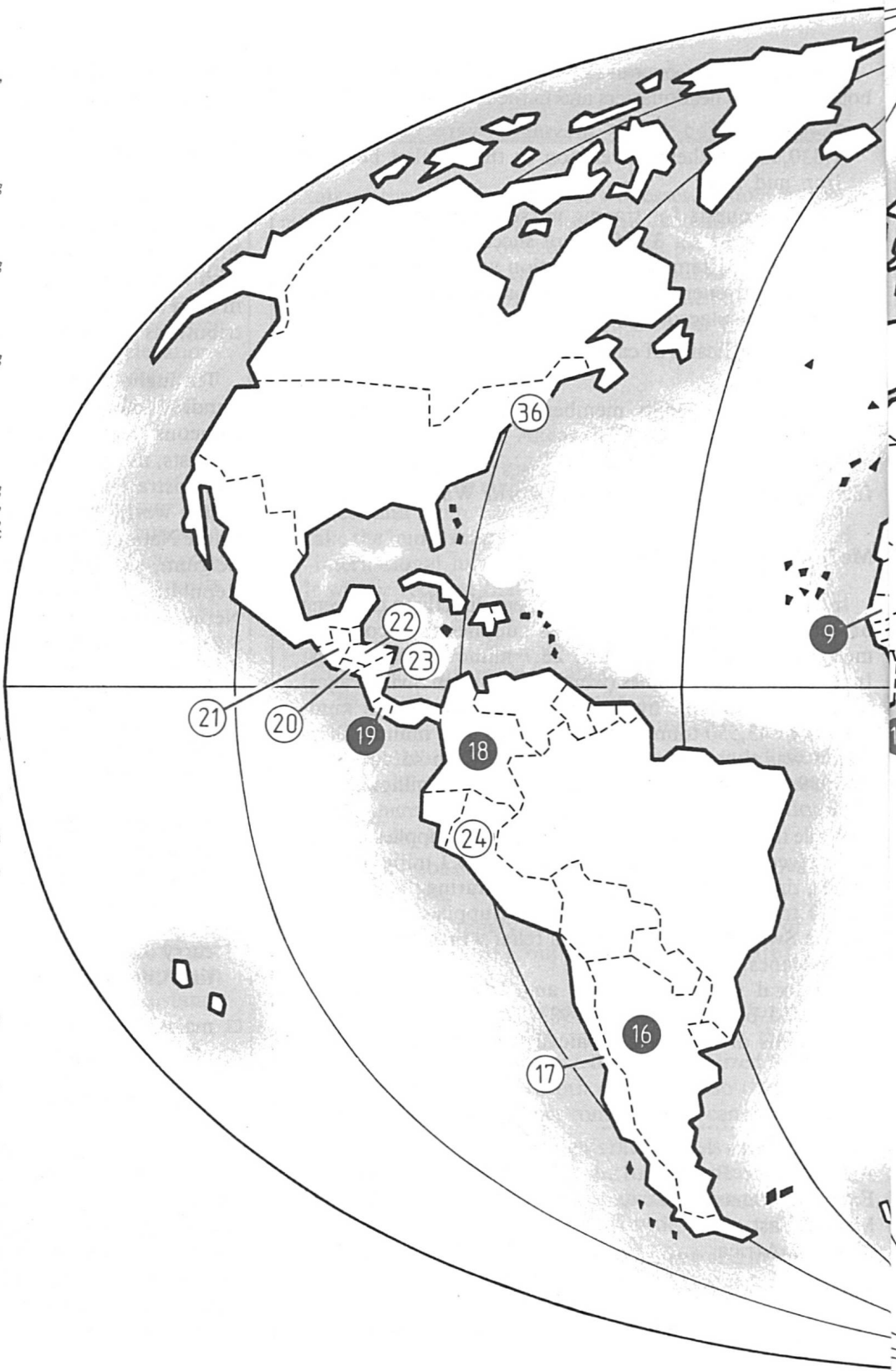
- 25. Afghanistan
- 26. Cambodia
- 27. Hong Kong
Regional delegation covering Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Taiwan.
- 28. India
Regional delegation covering India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Maldives and Nepal.
- 29. Indonesia
Regional delegation covering Indonesia/East Timor, Australia, Brunei, the Cook Islands, Fiji, the French Pacific territories, Kiribati, Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, (Federated States of) Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, United States Pacific territories, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- 30. Myanmar
- 31. Pakistan
- 32. Philippines
- 33. Sri Lanka
- 34. Thailand
- 35. Viet Nam
Regional delegation covering Viet Nam and Laos.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

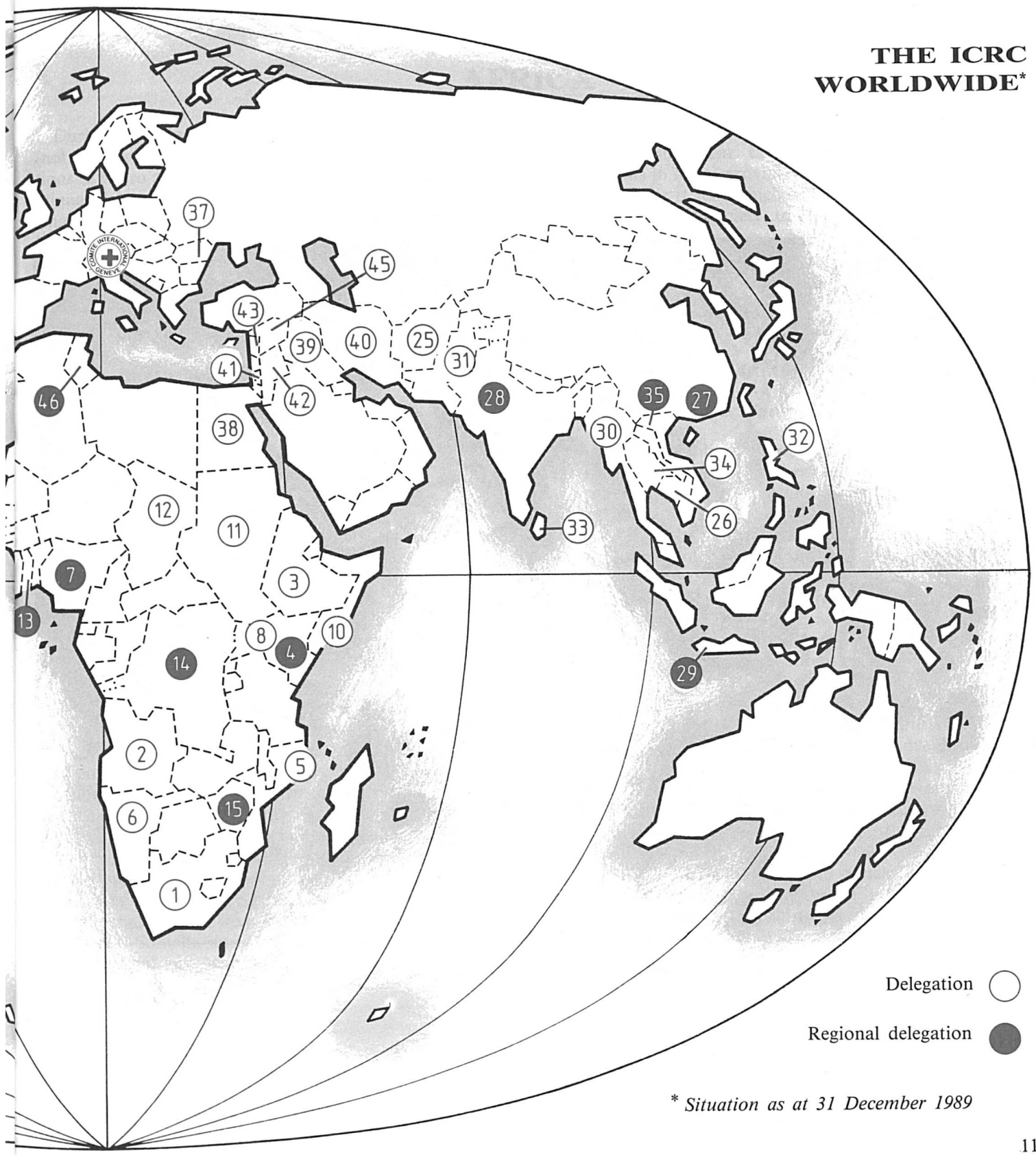
- 36. United States
- 37. Romania

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- 38. Egypt
- 39. Iraq
- 40. Iran
- 41. Israel and the occupied territories
- 42. Jordan
- 43. Lebanon
- 44. Mauritania
- 45. Syria
- 46. Tunisia
Regional delegation covering Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and the conflict in the Western Sahara.
(The delegation for the Arabian Peninsula is based in Geneva.)



THE ICRC WORLDWIDE*



* Situation as at 31 December 1989