

# Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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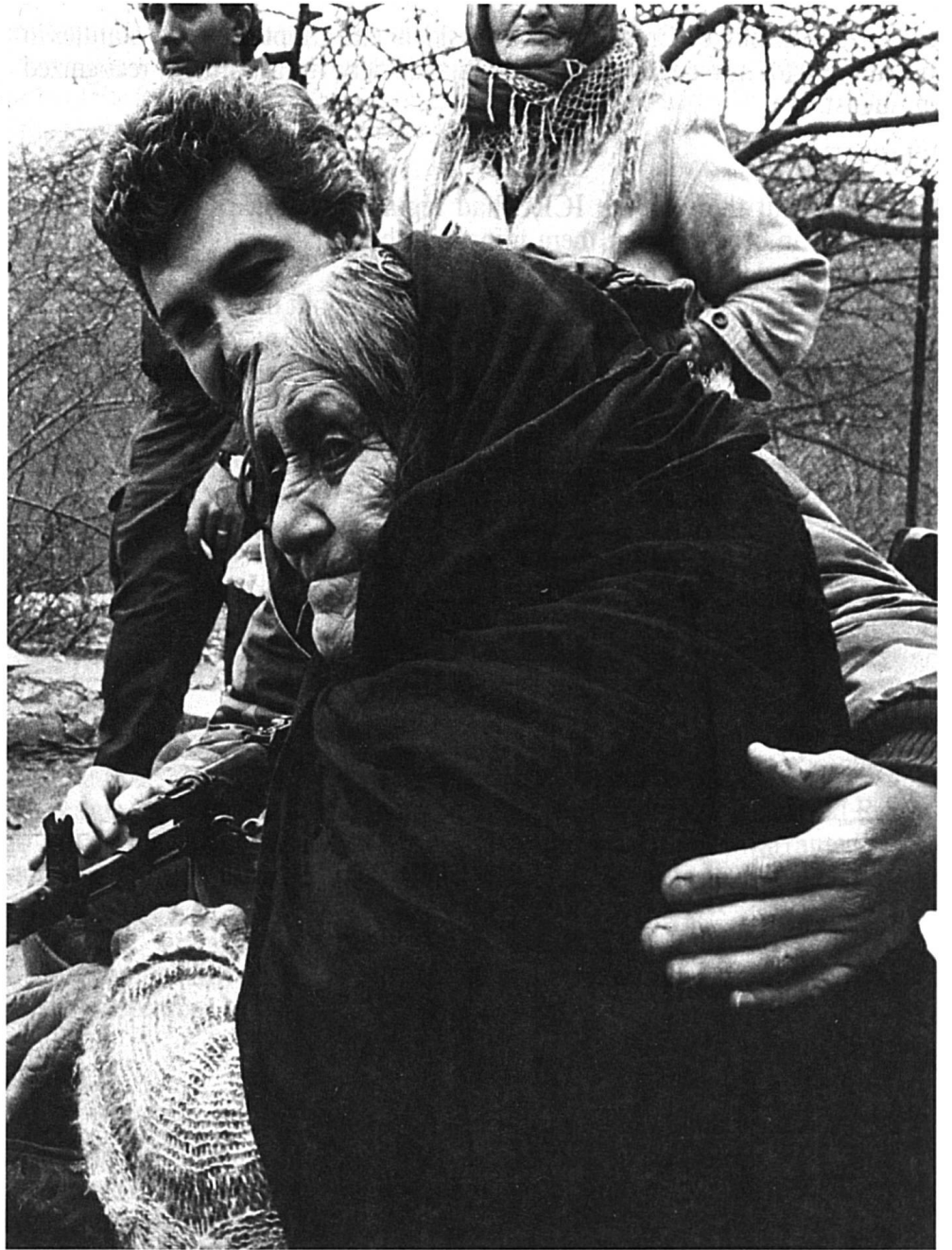
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ICRC/Z. Khachikian



An Armenian soldier comforts an elderly Azeri woman after the Kalbadjar region was taken.

**Eastern Europe**

**ICRC regional delegation:**  
Moscow

**The Caucasus**

**ICRC delegations:**  
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

**Central Asia:**

**ICRC delegation:**  
Tajikistan

**ICRC regional delegation:**  
Tashkent

**Staff**

ICRC expatriates\* : 62  
National Societies\* : 4  
Local employees\*\* : 170

**Total expenditure**

CHF 30,804,622

**Expenditure breakdown CHF**

Protection/Tracing:	4,410,179
Relief:	18,166,597
Medical assistance:	1,747,188
Cooperation with National Societies:	251,196
Dissemination:	1,195,126
Operational support:	3,226,199
Overheads:	1,808,137



ICRC / AR 12.93

# *EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA*

\* Average numbers calculated on an annual basis.

\*\* Under ICRC contract, as at December 1993.

*The countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as those in Eastern Europe, faced serious economic and social difficulties in 1993 which were accompanied by armed conflict in certain areas such as the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Tajikistan.*

*There were internal disturbances in Moscow in October which involved the parliament and the government. In the northern Caucasus, mainly towards the end of 1992, there was fighting in the autonomous republics of North Ossetia and Ingushetia; the human problems caused by the conflict lingered on into 1993. Although the subsequent situation was relatively calm, no real political solution was found, and displaced groups, the Ingush in particular, were not able to return to their homes. There were also sporadic violent clashes in Chechnia.*

*The Caucasus continued to be a source of great concern to the ICRC as the conflict around the Nagorny-Karabakh territory escalated and fighting in Georgia spread from one part of the country to another. Repeated offensives were launched by Karabakhi forces and much of the area around Nagorny-Karabakh came under Karabakhi control; hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes. Over 170,000 people received ICRC relief assistance. In Georgia, the Abkhaz took over the territory they had claimed as theirs. Fighting also flared up between Georgian government troops and forces loyal to former President Gamsakhurdia. Tens of thousands of people were displaced.*

*In Tajikistan intense fighting broke out at the end of 1992 and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced or became refugees. Over the year the situation gradually calmed down. Although people were encouraged to return to their homes, returnees faced many difficulties. At the end of the year there were still tens of thousands of people living as refugees in Afghanistan or displaced in the Gorno-Badakhshan region.*

*In such emergency situations as those mentioned above, the ICRC concentrates on activities such as visits to people arrested in connection with the conflict, protection of civilians not taking part in the fighting and the exchange of family messages.*

*In this unsettled and sometimes volatile context, the ICRC's work to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law and the Red Cross/Red Crescent principles is also essential. Delegates focused on giving dissemination seminars to groups as diverse as the armed forces,*



*government officials and members of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; key ICRC publications were translated for that purpose. A concerted effort was made to encourage the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia to become party to the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols. The ICRC also supported Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies by meeting the leaders to explain the procedures for official recognition, by giving seminars on the Movement and by helping with the respective National Societies' development.*

# Eastern Europe

The regional delegate in charge of ICRC activities in the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova was based at ICRC headquarters in Geneva.

## BALTIC STATES

Estonia acceded to the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols on 18 January.

On 31 March the ICRC confirmed its earlier recognition of the Estonia Red Cross, first granted in April 1922.

In Latvia, the regional delegate took part in the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the Latvian Red Cross. A seminar on the Movement and international humanitarian law, sponsored jointly by the ICRC and the Federation, was held in Cesis for Red Cross leaders and youth. A similar seminar was held for leaders of the Red Cross Society of Lithuania at the Academy of Science in Vilnius.

Ten publications and a few videos on international humanitarian law and the Movement and its fundamental principles were translated into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian for the respective National Societies' dissemination programmes.

The ICRC contacted representatives of the Ministries of Defence in the Baltic States to promote the inclusion of the law of war in the training of the newly organized armed forces.

## BELARUS

During a mission carried out at the end of June by the Deputy Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the regional delegate, the ICRC strengthened its relations with the authorities. The organization of dissemination seminars for the armed forces was discussed with a representative of the Ministry of Defence. Also in the course of the mission, the delegates met the leaders of the Red Cross Society of Belarus to discuss the procedure for its official recognition as a National Society.

ICRC delegates gave an account of the institution's work during a UNHCR-sponsored seminar in Minsk on refugee issues.

In October the ICRC and the Federation organized a three-day seminar in Minsk for representatives from Red Cross headquarters and branch offices.

## MOLDOVA

On 24 May the Republic of Moldova acceded to the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols.

There were no open hostilities between Moldovan and Transnistrian forces in 1993 owing to the installation in mid-1992 of a buffer force comprised of Moldovan, Transnistrian and Russian units. The need for humanitarian assistance diminished and the ICRC closed its office in Tiraspol (Transnistria) in January and the delegation in Chisinau in March.

After negotiations with the authorities in Tiraspol the ICRC received authorization to visit six detainees accused of terrorist acts; delegates carried out visits in May and October.

By March the authorities in Chisinau had informed the ICRC that there were no more detainees of concern to the ICRC held there.

Pending tracing cases related to the conflict in 1992 were submitted to the Deputy Minister of the Interior in Chisinau and to the Transnistrian Minister of Health. Both officials agreed to treat these cases with their Tripartite Commission \* one of the organizations handling cases of missing persons.

Delegates met the Chairman of the Red Cross Society of Moldova to discuss the future of dissemination work in the country and offer assistance in this task. A dissemination session on the law of war was held for officers of the 14th Russian army based in Tiraspol.

The regional delegate presented the work of the ICRC at a UNHCR-sponsored seminar in Chisinau on the problems faced by refugees and displaced people.

## UKRAINE

The Red Cross Society of Ukraine was formally recognized by the ICRC in September following a joint mission by representatives from the ICRC and the Federation.

Early in the year Kiev served as a logistics base for ICRC relief operations in Tajikistan and the Caucasus. To this end, a delegate was posted there for several months.

An ICRC lawyer participated in a UNHCR seminar in Kiev on refugees. The regional delegate travelled to the Ukraine to meet representatives of the Red Cross and evaluate the need for technical assistance for its tracing service.

\* The Tripartite Commission is composed of Moldovan, Transnistrian and Russian representatives.

## MOSCOW Regional delegation (Russian Federation, including all autonomous republics and regions)

The year 1993 proved challenging for the Russian Federation as the government confronted potentially volatile economic, social and political issues. A power struggle among the leadership culminated in internal disturbances in Moscow in October.

Tension between the Ingush and the Ossetians degenerated into armed conflict in November 1992; some 60,000 ethnic Ingush had to leave villages situated to the east of Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia). The government in Moscow declared a state of emergency and set up Russian buffer forces in an attempt to keep the situation from deteriorating further. However, no solution was found to the problems which fomented the strife.

By the end of the year the situation for the approximately 200,000 refugees who had

fled from Georgia to North Ossetia in 1992 had not improved significantly; assistance from local authorities decreased and there was no large-scale return of the refugees to Georgia during the year.

In Chechnia, a power struggle between the President's supporters and the opposition erupted into armed confrontation on several occasions.

The ICRC carried out a number of missions in the northern Caucasus to assess the needs there. An office was opened in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria) in July in order to monitor the situation and to provide the ICRC with a logistics base for operations in the region.

The 1868 Declaration of St Petersburg, the first modern multilateral treaty concerning the prohibition of projectiles causing unnecessary suffering in warfare, was commemorated on 1-2 December during a two-day symposium sponsored by the Mayor of St Petersburg, the Russian Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs and the ICRC. High-ranking representatives of the armed forces of 32 countries attended the ceremonies to mark the 125th anniversary of the Declaration. The ICRC President led the institution's delegation.



⊕ ICRC regional delegation    + ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.93

### IN 1993 THE ICRC:

- visited about 40 people detained in connection with the events in Moscow in October and the violence between Ingush and Ossetians in the northern Caucasus;
- provided relief supplies to some 28,800 people directly affected by the fighting between North Ossetia and Ingushetia.

The ICRC regional delegation in Moscow worked to develop an overall dissemination programme which included the translation of ICRC publications into Russian. It also expanded its network of contacts with government officials and representatives of the Russian Red Cross, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Russian and international media.

### Activities for detainees

Between August and December ICRC delegates visited 18 people detained in connection with the Ossetian/Ingush conflict in various places of detention, including Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) and Pyatigorsk (Stavropol Krai).

Following the October disturbances in Moscow the head of the regional delegation met the Russian authorities and offered the institution's services to visit people detained because of the events. Delegates conducted visits in accordance with the ICRC's standard criteria to 23 detainees held in Moscow.

### Activities for the civilian population

Of particular concern to the institution was the situation of the approximately 60,000 ethnic Ingush from North Ossetia displaced to Ingushetia by the fighting in 1992. During July the ICRC assisted some 28,800 Ingush and Ossetians rendered vulnerable by the conflict – including the elderly, large families and people sheltered in public buildings or in villages isolated because of the conflict. With the onset of winter delegates carried out a second distribution of family parcels, blankets, kitchen sets and stoves. The distributions were made in close cooperation with branches of the Russian Red Cross.

### Medical activities

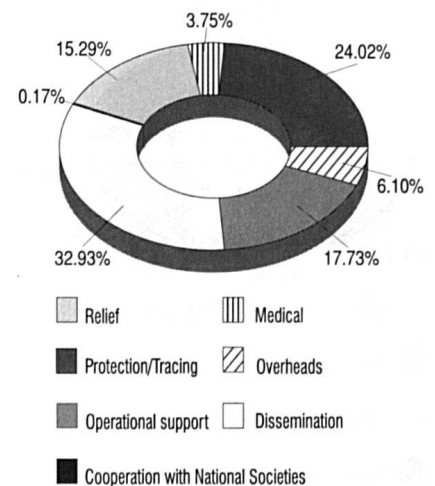
On 5 October, two days after armed clashes began in Moscow, the ICRC provided much-needed emergency supplies to five medical facilities treating the wounded. Medical supplies were also distributed to hospitals and first-aid posts in Ingushetia following the conflict there.

### Dissemination

Talks were held with representatives of the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Foreign Affairs to prepare seminars on international humanitarian law for members of the armed forces. In June seminars for senior officers were held in Moscow and Rostov on the Don.

In cooperation with the Russian Red Cross, the ICRC sponsored seminars on dissemination in St Petersburg and Nalchik for local branches of the National Society in the northern Caucasus and in the north-western part of the Russian

Moscow regional delegation  
Total expenditure in 1993:  
CHF 2,340,000



Federation. Seminars on the law of war were also held in several different cities, including Moscow and Nalchik, for high-ranking officers from the Ministries of Defence and the Interior.

A large number of ICRC documents were translated into Russian and published by the regional delegation so as to make available appropriate documentation on ICRC activities and international humanitarian law. The publications were distributed in Russia, as well as in other countries of the former Soviet Union where Russian is used.

## The Caucasus

### ARMENIA/AZERBAIJAN

The territory of Nagorny-Karabakh has long been a bone of contention between the ethnic Armenians who live there and want independence and the Azerbaijani authorities. In 1993, the conflict between Karabakhi forces and Azerbaijani troops dragged on through another year of heavy fighting. Karabakhi offensives in areas around the territory left thousands dead or wounded and displaced an estimated 700,000 Azerbaijanis. Hundreds of civilians and military personnel were captured. Shelling along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border continued on and off throughout the year. In Armenia, the embargo imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey resulted in severe electricity and fuel shortages.

In April, with the capture of the Kelbajar district, Karabakhi forces broadened the Lachin corridor (which had been opened between Nagorny-Karabakh and Armenia in May 1992) to the full width of Nagorny-Karabakh. Karabakhi forces took Agdam during the July offensives. Towns to the south, Jebrail, Fizuli and Gubatly, suffered the same fate in August. The Zangelan district in the south-western tip of Azerbaijan was seized by the Karabakhi forces in October.

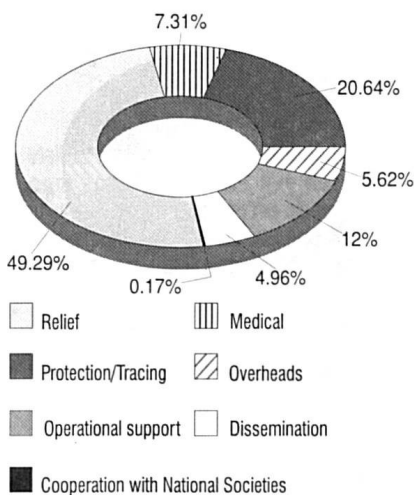
The situation remained relatively calm in Nakhichevan (an autonomous Azerbaijani republic surrounded by Armenia, Turkey and Iran).

In February the Deputy Delegate General met the President of the local Supreme Council and the Chairman of the Defence Committee in Stepanakert to discuss ICRC activities in the region and dissemination of international humanitarian law.

Lack of security prevented delegates from being based in Stepanakert from October 1992 until March, when the ICRC re-established a permanent presence in Nagorny-Karabakh.

The ICRC President received the Patriarch of the Catholic Armenians and Katholikos of Cilicia, accompanied by the Bishop of Stepanakert, and at a later

Armenia/Azerbaijan  
Total expenditure in 1993:  
CHF 7,070,000





date Sheik-ul-Islam, the spiritual leader of the Islamic community in the Caucasus, at ICRC headquarters where discussions centred on the humanitarian needs resulting from the conflict. In December the Delegate General met the President of Azerbaijan in Baku, where they discussed ICRC activities in Azerbaijan.

In June both the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia acceded to the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Armenia also acceded to the two Additional Protocols of 1977.

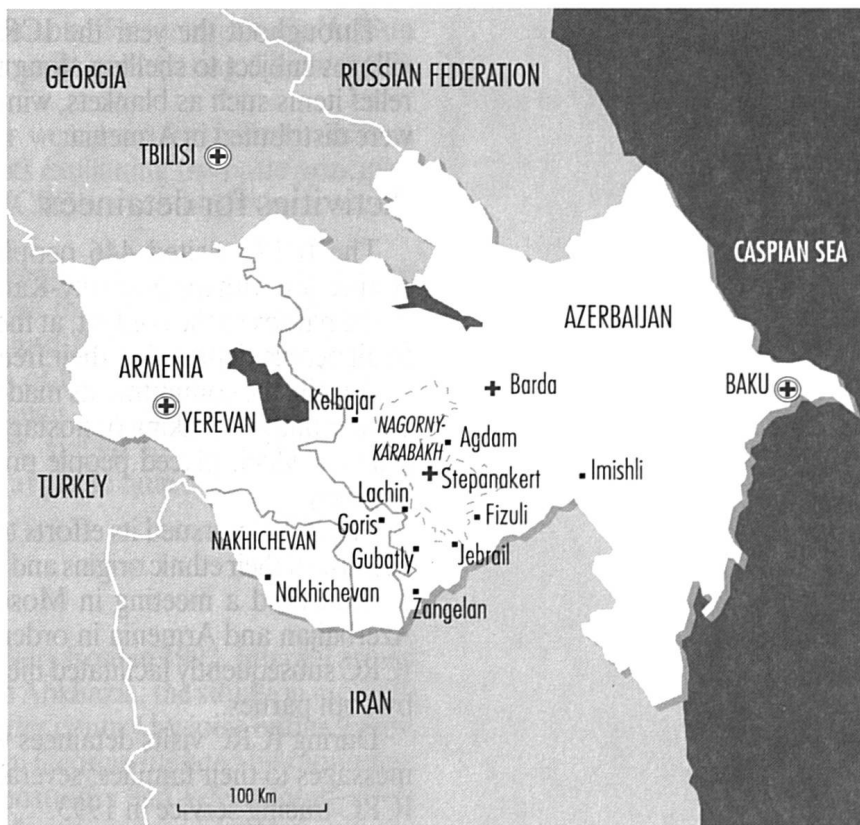
### Activities for the civilian population

The ICRC appealed to the parties to the conflict to ensure respect for the civilian population. ICRC delegates worked to spread awareness of international humanitarian law among combatants, officials and the general public, particularly in conflict areas. Whenever violations were observed or reported the ICRC made representations to the authorities.

The ICRC provided assistance to people in conflict areas in and around the Nagorny-Karabakh territory and along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. In all, the ICRC assisted approximately 170,000 people in Azerbaijan and in Armenia. The Federation concentrated on needs in non-combat areas in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

When tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis fled the fighting in the Kelbajar district in April, ICRC delegates worked quickly to evacuate a number of women and children travelling on foot northwards across a 3,400 m high snow-covered mountain pass. Some 6,000 destitute families were provided with blankets, clothing and food parcels.

During the offensives around Agdam in July delegates based in Barda distributed food parcels and reinforced plastic sheeting to some 4,000 families without shelter. Following the offensives in the south and south-west in August, the ICRC brought in material to instal temporary shelters for displaced people camping along the road leading eastward towards Beilagan and Imishli. National Societies in the region set up camps for about 100,000 displaced people.



⊕ ICRC delegation    + ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.93

IN 1993 THE ICRC:

- distributed 1,550 tonnes of assistance to over 170,000 people affected by the conflict.



Throughout the year the ICRC assisted vulnerable groups in Armenia in villages subject to shelling along the border with Azerbaijan. Food parcels and relief items such as blankets, winter footwear, plastic sheeting and kitchen sets were distributed in Armenia.

### Activities for detainees

The ICRC visited 446 people who had been captured and detained in connection with the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict. In spite of its repeated requests to the parties to the conflict, at the end of the year delegates did not have access to all people deprived of their freedom.

Despite the commitments made by the parties concerned and their statements condemning the taking of hostages, the ICRC did not notice any change in this practice which placed people protected by international humanitarian law in jeopardy.

The ICRC pursued its efforts to obtain the release of all detainees held solely because of their ethnic origins and whose lives were endangered by such detention. It sponsored a meeting in Moscow in March between representatives from Azerbaijan and Armenia in order to encourage solutions to this problem. The ICRC subsequently facilitated the return home of a number of detainees released by both parties.

During ICRC visits detainees were given the opportunity to send Red Cross messages to their families; several hundred such messages were handled by the ICRC tracing service in 1993.

### Medical activities

ICRC surveys early in the year revealed that hospitals treating the war-wounded in both Armenia and Nagorny-Karabakh had adequate stocks since they were receiving assistance from other international organizations. ICRC assistance was then directed towards poorly supplied hospitals and first-aid posts near the front line in Azerbaijan. Distributions consisted mainly of emergency surgical material, dressing material for wounds and burns, plaster, blood bags, medicines and paediatric sets.

Later in the year, when the conflict intensified, the ICRC gave emergency assistance to hospitals receiving war-wounded in Armenia, Nagorny-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. In addition, two ICRC mobile water tanks were set up at a field hospital in the southern part of Azerbaijan.

### Dissemination

Seminars on international humanitarian law were organized in Armenia for high-ranking officers under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence, members of the armed forces under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, and

officers from the Russian units stationed in Armenia. The delegation in Yerevan also worked closely with the Red Cross of Armenia in preparing documents in Armenian for dissemination purposes.

Two series of seminars on the law of war were held for military units in Nagorny-Karabakh. Radio and television spots explaining the basic principles of international humanitarian law and the ICRC's work in the region were broadcast on local stations.

The basic principles of international humanitarian law were explained to members of the Azerbaijani armed forces in all front-line barracks under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. Seminars on international humanitarian law and the work of the ICRC were also held for representatives of the Red Crescent in Azerbaijan. Several ICRC publications were translated into Azeri. Information spots, similar to those broadcast in Nagorny-Karabakh, were aired in Azerbaijan at prime time twice a week over a four-month period.

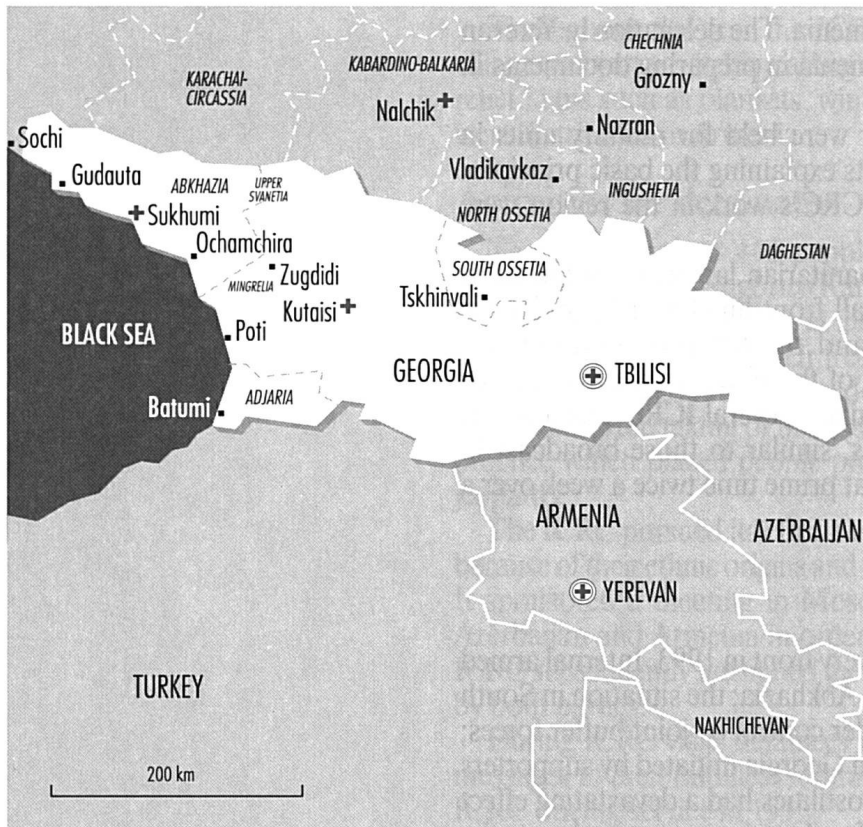
## GEORGIA

Georgia faced serious problems on nearly every front in 1993. Internal armed conflict continued through much of the year in Abkhazia; the situation in South Ossetia, far from being resolved, was kept under control by joint buffer forces; there was fresh armed confrontation in western Georgia initiated by supporters of the former President Gamsakhurdia. The hostilities had a devastating effect on the country's economy, making it difficult for the government to devote the necessary attention and resources to opportunities resulting from independence.

After the outbreak of fighting in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia in August 1992, the region was administered by two governments: Abkhaz separatists ruled from Gudauta and Georgian loyalists from Sukhumi. The Georgian government requested help from the international community in resolving the conflict, in particular the deployment of United Nations military observers. The ICRC appealed to the parties to the conflict to respect the civilian population.

During the year there were a few lulls in the fighting and three short-lived cease-fires. The third cease-fire agreement, signed by the warring parties in Abkhazia at the end of July, seemed to clear the way for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Unfortunately, this respite was brief and in September fighting resumed simultaneously on several fronts. A few days after the fall of Sukhumi to Abkhaz troops, most of the region was under their control. Once again the ICRC appealed to the authorities to ensure respect for the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law.

Fearing reprisals, a hundred thousand non-Abkhaz fled the region. Svanetia and Mingrelia received the largest numbers of displaced, the majority of whom



⊕ ICRC delegation    + ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.93

were given shelter in public buildings or private homes. Other displaced families fled to Adjara, Tbilisi and other parts of Georgia. This brought the total number of people displaced as a result of the fighting in Abkhazia, which broke out in August 1992, to an estimated 250,000.

On 1 December, at a UN-sponsored meeting in Geneva, both parties to the Abkhaz conflict signed a Memorandum of Understanding whereby they agreed *inter alia* to refrain from the use of force or threats of force, to release all prisoners unconditionally, to exchange lists with the names of people reported missing, to reinter the dead and to establish conditions conducive to the voluntary return of displaced people. In conformity with its mandate the ICRC offered its services as a neutral intermediary to help the parties organize the simultaneous release of all prisoners.

Even before the Abkhaz conflict was over, Zugdidi and several other nearby towns in western Georgia were taken in September by armed supporters of former Georgian President Gamsakhurdia. Fighting between

them and Georgian government forces became more violent in October. In early November government forces reclaimed Zugdidi and control of Mingrelia.

Except for minor incidents the situation in South Ossetia was calm. The internal border, controlled by the buffer forces, was open and a limited number of displaced Georgians moved back home. On the political level, however, there was no breakthrough on basic issues.

ICRC offices, opened in August 1992 in Gudauta and Sukhumi on each side of the front line, were reinforced with additional staff in July when the Abkhaz conflict intensified. The Gudauta office was closed at the end of September after the fall of Sukhumi. ICRC offices were opened in Zugdidi and in Kutaisi, in October and November respectively, to monitor the situation in western Georgia. The ICRC delegation in Tbilisi served as a logistics base for ICRC operations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the northern Caucasus.

The Georgian parliament voted to accede to the four Geneva Conventions and the two Protocols; it deposited its declaration of accession with the Swiss government on 14 September.

**IN 1993 THE ICRC:**

- assisted more than 63,000 people directly affected by the conflict;
- handled over 3,500 Red Cross messages for family members separated by the fighting.

## Activities for the civilian population

Throughout the year the ICRC was in contact with the relevant authorities and drew their attention to the needs of conflict victims. During a meeting with the Georgian President in May in Tbilisi, the ICRC Delegate General and the head of delegation discussed the ICRC's activities in the Caucasus and expressed concern about risks faced by the civilian population, in particular shelling in populated areas and the harassment of certain groups in both Abkhaz- and Georgian-held areas. Delegates visited villages in Abkhazia and frequently reminded the local authorities of their responsibility for the protection of these groups.

In early October the ICRC Director of Operations met Abkhaz representatives in Geneva, where they discussed the institution's concern for the safety of the remaining minority groups in Abkhazia and its desire to have access to all people detained in connection with the conflict. At the same time, the Delegate General met Abkhaz authorities and Russian military leaders in Sukhumi, where he also raised issues related to the protection of civilians and detainees. The Georgian Head of State's special envoy was received by the ICRC President in mid-October at headquarters, where discussions again centred on the needs of the displaced and the protection of civilians and detainees.

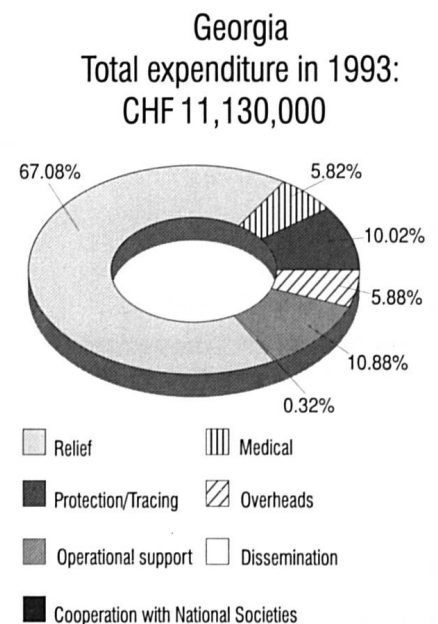
Assistance was given wherever needs were observed. Early in the year the ICRC distributed footwear and clothing to people in Gudauta rendered vulnerable by the conflict; clothing, blankets and family parcels were distributed to victims of the shelling in Sukhumi; people in Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) were provided with blankets.

After Abkhaz forces took control of Sukhumi, ICRC surveys revealed that many of the displaced had left most of their possessions behind and faced the coming winter virtually destitute. Delegates assisted people fleeing Abkhazia through the mountains to Upper Svanetia in October: convoys brought ICRC emergency relief supplies into western Georgia from Tbilisi and over a 15-day period more than 4,800 food parcels and 13,500 blankets were distributed. The ICRC also set up a relief programme in coordination with committees organized to look after the needs of the displaced living in public buildings in conflict areas.

The Federation, which had an office in Kutaisi, took responsibility for the displaced in areas where there was no armed conflict.

In all, the ICRC provided over 43,000 people with emergency supplies such as food parcels, blankets, plastic sheeting, shoes, clothing and cooking stoves.

The ICRC tracing service handled over 3,500 Red Cross messages for families separated by the conflict. Family reunifications were organized for both Abkhaz and Georgian families.



## Activities for detainees

Delegates maintained contacts with the authorities in an effort to obtain access to all detainees of concern to the ICRC. The institution publicly reminded the parties to the conflict that the taking of hostages was a violation of international humanitarian law and that prisoners should not be held in places near the front lines. Although the ICRC did not always have regular access to people detained in connection with the Abkhaz and western Georgian conflicts, delegates visited about one hundred civilians and combatants detained by one or another of the warring parties in 1993.

During the first nine months of the year ICRC visits to detainees held in connection with the Abkhaz conflict were carried out on both sides of the front line, i.e. in both Gudauta and Sukhumi. After Abkhaz forces reclaimed Sukhumi delegates continued visits to places of detention in Abkhazia; they also began visits in November to Abkhaz prisoners in Tbilisi. On 19 December the institution served as a neutral intermediary when prisoners were simultaneously released by the parties in conformity with the Memorandum of Understanding of 1 December.

## Medical activities

The ICRC provided medical requisites to hospitals in conflict areas in Abkhazia and western Georgia, including Mingrelia, as well as in Tbilisi. Regular surveys were carried out to monitor needs at medical facilities treating the war-wounded. Distributions included emergency medical supplies such as medicines, dressing material for wounds and burns, injection sets, gloves, catheters and sutures.

When heavy fighting broke out in July and again in September emergency stocks were quickly depleted. The ICRC hired a cargo aircraft to bring in several tonnes of medical supplies for hospitals receiving the war-wounded in Abkhazia, as well as in Poti, Kutaisi and Tbilisi. An ICRC team consisting of a doctor and a nurse accompanied the medical supplies.

From September to November the ICRC assisted medical facilities in Mingrelia, in particular those in areas controlled by the opposition which could not be supplied by the Ministry of Health.

## Dissemination

Seminars on international humanitarian law and the activities of the ICRC were given for unit commanders on the front line in Gudauta, Ochamchira and Sukhumi, the three main towns in Abkhazia. Brochures in Georgian and Russian on international humanitarian law were distributed to combatants.



# Central Asia

## TAJIKISTAN

In January 1993, the ICRC, which had previously covered operations in Tajikistan from its regional delegation in Tashkent, officially opened a delegation in Dushanbe.

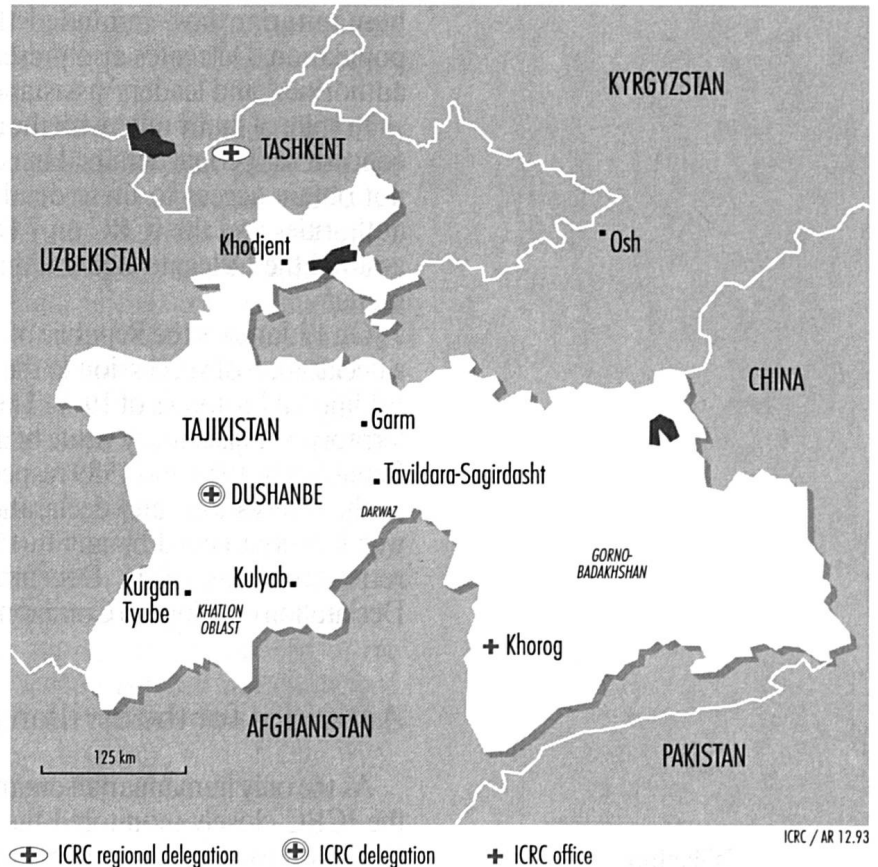
By the beginning of 1993 the armed conflict which had broken out in Tajikistan in early May 1992 had driven some 500,000 people (about 10% of the population) from their homes, including an estimated 60,000 people from Kurgan Tyube and a smaller number from Kulyab who took refuge in Afghanistan when fighting again intensified in December 1992. With between 20,000 and 50,000 people killed, it proved to be the deadliest conflict in the former Soviet Union.

At the outset, the fighting had been viewed as an internal armed conflict between pro-Communists and an Islamic-democratic alliance – with some underlying clan pressure. Later it was observed that ideological considerations were far less important than regional identity based on political and economic interests and historical roots.

Through much of 1993 the situation remained unstable owing to infiltration of the Tajik-Afghan border by armed groups based in Afghanistan, the presence of groups of irregulars within the country and perceived regional imbalances.

Intermittent skirmishes between armed groups and government forces in the western part of the mountainous Gorno-Badakhshan *oblast* (province), known as the Darwaz region, and the fact that the main road from Dushanbe was still blocked with snow in May meant that the resident Pamiri population, as well as some 40,000 displaced people, were cut off from their main supply route. After fighting flared up in the region in May, the ICRC carried out a survey of the situation and a delegate was based in Khorog from July until mid-November. Assistance for the local population was provided by various non-governmental organizations.

During its high-level meetings with government officials and leaders of the opposition the ICRC, in accordance with the provisions of international



⊕ ICRC regional delegation   ⊕ ICRC delegation   + ICRC office

ICRC / AR 12.93

### IN 1993 THE ICRC:

- distributed over 2,900 tonnes of relief supplies to some 312,000 people affected by the conflict.

humanitarian law, reminded them of their responsibility for the civilian population. Delegates also presented the activities of the ICRC and sought the authorities' and leaders' assistance in facilitating the delegation's work.

In spite of many talks with the authorities and a report expressing the ICRC's concern for people detained in connection with the conflict, the institution did not obtain access to these detainees. Nevertheless, in a meeting between the authorities and the ICRC on 7 December the President of the Supreme Soviet assured the Delegate General that the relevant authorities would look into the matter.

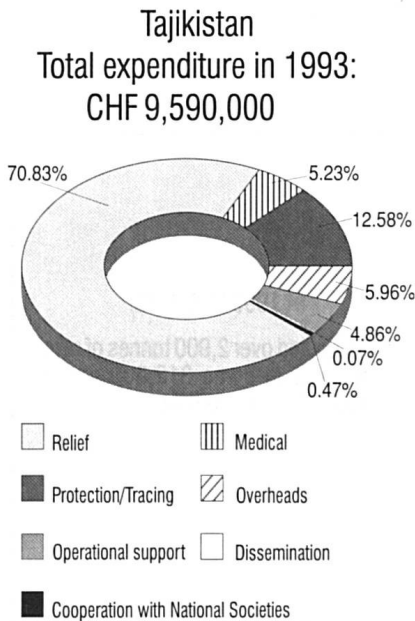
On 12 January the Republic of Tajikistan deposited with the Swiss government a declaration of succession to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. These instruments were already applicable for the territory of Tajikistan by virtue of their ratification by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1954 and 1989 respectively. The declaration contained no reference to the reservations and declaration previously made by the Soviet Union, nor was it accompanied by any further reservations or declarations. It took effect retroactively as of 21 December 1991, the date on which the Alma Ata Declaration creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was signed.

### Activities for the civilian population

As the only humanitarian organization operational in Tajikistan until February, the ICRC closely monitored the needs of the displaced people and returnees. Delegates focused their efforts on regions most affected by the fighting: in the capital, in the Garm valley and in the Khatlon *oblast*. Vital emergency distributions of blankets, clothing, plastic sheeting, family parcels and bulk food were carried out. In Dushanbe and Kurgan Tyube there was particularly close collaboration with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan. Some 70,000 people benefited from ICRC relief supplies before the situation improved during the second half of the year.

In the Garm valley, where there were an estimated 45,000 displaced people, food stocks dipped very low when supplies from Dushanbe were cut off by the fighting. When the Garm valley was retaken by government forces at the end of February the ICRC was able to bring in two aid convoys. The only route into the area was through a treacherous mountain pass from Kyrgyzstan. Later, it was possible to transport relief supplies by road directly from Dushanbe.

In mid-March the government unexpectedly ordered all displaced people in Dushanbe and the Garm valley to return to their homes without delay. The ICRC kept delegates posted in the south of the country because it was deeply concerned about the lack of security for people returning to their homes. Until then there had been about 65,000 displaced in Dushanbe alone. Approximately





half of them had been sheltered in public buildings and received direct assistance from the ICRC. Those in private homes were helped by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan.

The sudden arrival of an estimated 100,000 people in the Khatlon *oblast* (in the south) created serious tension between the resident population and the returnees. Those returning to the area were particularly vulnerable to hostility from the resident population, as well as to marauding bandits and irregulars. The ICRC distributed family parcels both to displaced people in the area and to the returnees. Since the resources of the resident population (estimated at 280,000) had been sorely taxed by the needs of the newcomers, wheat flour was also distributed in the villages assisted by the ICRC. From September to November the ICRC cooperated with UNHCR to provide blankets and plastic sheeting to several thousand families facing the winter in precarious housing conditions.

Over the year the delegation in Dushanbe handled only a limited number of Red Cross messages. Either people separated from their families by the conflict had other means of communicating with their relatives or there was no way of tracing the relatives in order to transmit Red Cross messages.

The ICRC pursued discussions with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior to determine the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and also helped people with missing relatives to prepare their case for review by the commission set up by the government for this purpose.

## Medical assistance

The ICRC provided emergency medical assistance to medical facilities in areas affected by the conflict. In and around Dushanbe, in the Garm valley, the Khatlon *oblast*, Tavildara-Sagirdasht and later on in Gorno-Badakhshan, there was a severe shortage of medical supplies such as medicines, dressing material, soap and disinfectant. Special attention was given to hospitals and first-aid posts treating the war-wounded.

From February to April the ICRC medical personnel ran a mobile clinic for displaced people and returnees afraid of travelling to a local medical facility because of the poor security conditions. More than 2,100 consultations were given, mostly on collective farms and in isolated villages. The Federation was responsible for meeting the medical and nutritional needs among the 30,000 displaced in the Khodjent area.

As the situation became calmer the ICRC was able to reduce its assistance and concentrate on supplying medical facilities treating the wounded after skirmishes in isolated areas.

## Dissemination

ICRC delegates had talks with the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior, as well as commanders of the 201st Russian division and CIS border guards, with a view to introducing a dissemination programme at staff level. An agreement was made to initiate such a programme.

Dissemination seminars were held for armed groups in the Garm valley and in the northern part of the Gorno-Badakhshan *oblast*.

Public appeals were made on television, radio and in newspapers in an effort to enhance knowledge of international humanitarian law and respect for the red cross and red crescent emblems. A number of ICRC publications were translated into Tajik.

For the first time since the end of the conflict, Red Crescent headquarters staff and branch leaders met in Dushanbe in October for a seminar on the Movement which was jointly organized by the ICRC and the Federation.

## TASHKENT

### Regional delegation

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

In January the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, representing the government, and the ICRC Delegate General signed a headquarters agreement in Tashkent establishing an ICRC regional delegation to cover the above four newly independent States of Central Asia.

The regional delegate thereafter regularly met high-level officials from the governments of the countries covered and discussed issues related to international humanitarian law, including dissemination programmes in the region. In all, the regional delegate gave some six seminars presenting the work of the ICRC, the Movement and international humanitarian law.

To clarify the procedures leading to recognition as a National Society the regional delegate held a number of meetings with representatives of Societies in Central Asia that were not yet officially members of the Movement. Efforts were made to encourage the Societies' development and enhance their understanding of the fundamental principles of the Movement. A tracing workshop was held in Tashkent in mid-November for all five Societies in Central Asia, including Tajikistan. The regional delegate also had talks with leaders of local branches in the four republics covered by the delegation.

In June the Delegate General, accompanied by the regional delegate, again met the Uzbek Prime Minister and other high-level officials in Tashkent, where talks focused on the upcoming International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, the situation in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's preparations for

accession to the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. The Republic of Uzbekistan acceded to the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols in October.

The Deputy Delegate General, accompanied by the regional delegate, went on mission to Central Asia in November. In Almaty they met several high-ranking Kazakh officials, including the Minister of Justice, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, to discuss Kazakhstan's participation in the conference to commemorate the 1868 Declaration of St Petersburg. They then travelled on to Bishkek for talks with the Chairman of the Defence Committee of Kyrgyzstan. Talks were also held with the Uzbek Deputy Minister of Defence in Tashkent.

The Delegate General travelled to Ashgabad with the regional delegate in December and held high-level talks with Turkmen officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister. Dissemination and the ICRC's activities in the region were among the topics discussed. From there the regional delegate went on to Nebit Dagh where he gave a seminar on international humanitarian law and the Movement for representatives of the Red Crescent Society and the government.