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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 32

This report is published thrice-weekly as a general update on Red Cross Red Crescent activities during the Balkans crisis, targeting primarily the Movement's components and supporters. Today's text can also be found on the internet: www.ifrc.org and www.icrc.org

LATEST EVENTS

New website to restore family links

Today (Wednesday) the ICRC is opening a special internet website to help restore contact between members of families split up by the crisis in the Balkans. People anxious to locate relatives can access the site from any computer linked to the internet. The aim of the move is to speed up traditional methods of putting relatives back in touch with each other. It is the first time the Red Cross Red Crescent has used the internet for this purpose.

The ICRC has installed computers with modems for use by enquirers in its offices in Albania, Macedonia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The service is also available in the offices of the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies in all countries which have received refugees. Skilled staff will be on hand to help with the process.

The site can be accessed from anywhere at <http://www.familylinks.icrc.org>, or through the ICRC's usual website: <http://www.icrc.org>

For people unable to use the electronic service, the traditional means of restoring family links (Red Cross messages or radio broadcasts) will still be available at all ICRC and National Society offices.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

Relief: Red Cross branches of the Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) received emergency distributions at the end of last week including 60 MT of food in bulk, comprising flour, oil, sugar, and salt. In total, 2,440 individual and 1,000 hygiene parcels were delivered, some of which have been sent directly to the Red Cross in Valjevo. Non food emergency assistance comprising 7,000 m² of plastic sheeting, 780 mattresses and 240 blankets were also distributed. The Cacak Red Cross branch which provides food for five collective centres (200 refugee families) also received assistance.

The Vojvodina Red Cross branch has received four truckloads of emergency relief items from Greece, earmarked for distribution to social cases. The German Red Cross has funded 57,000 hygiene parcels for the refugee programme, of which 8,424 have already been

delivered to YRC regional warehouses. Three trucks, loaded with 68 tonnes of oil and one truck with 22 tonnes of beans, have arrived in Belgrade.

Health: Deliveries of surgical and infusion material to hospitals in Serbia took place during the second week of May. Supplies for the treatment of 200 wounded people were donated to the Nis hospital.

Water and sanitation : A local company has received an order from the Red Cross for 27 reservoirs to be installed in Novi Sad, on the left bank of the Danube.

Logistics: Local suppliers from Belgrade and Vojvodina have signed a contract to provide 178 tonnes of pasta, 88 tonnes of salt and 30 tonnes of yeast. Since the beginning of the current crisis, a total of 1,288 MT of food purchased from local companies has been delivered to the Red Cross. Other supplies have included 4,000 mattresses, 9,000m² of plastic sheeting, 50 stoves and 90,000 DM worth of medical supplies. During the same period, emergency distributions from abroad now total 313 MT of bulk food; 21,500 individual parcels; 7,800 baby kits; 3,644 hygiene parcels; 4,200 blankets; and 1,075 rolls of plastic sheeting, as well as generators, dressing sets, candles and water and sanitation material. The new YRC regional warehouse in Sabac is now fully operational. A truck has been assigned to this warehouse and regular distributions began on 14 May.

Yugoslav Red Cross: The YRC organized an open-air concert over the weekend in Belgrade. The concert marked Blood Donors' Day as well as the conclusion of the Federal Republic's Red Cross week.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Among other local media, Radio Television of Serbia reported on last week's aid for refugees and preparations for joint field offices. The ICRC's mission to Kosovo (*see Reports No 30 and 31*) was the subject of intense media interest.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Montenegro)

Since the start of this week, there has been an upward surge in the number of internally displaced persons from Kosovo. Most come directly from Kosovska Mitrovica to Ulcinj without transiting through Rozaje. The majority are reportedly in poor physical condition and are housed in collective centres in Ulcinj - the Neptune camp, the Pine Tree camp, the former barracks and Turjak. Lack of accommodation has resurfaced as the major problem in the region. Last week, over 500 displaced persons from Serbia were registered in three municipalities in northern Montenegro.

Health: On 14 May, medical supplies for the treatment of 500 wounded were sent from Belgrade to Montenegro.

Tracing: Five telephone lines are now available for displaced persons at the tracing offices in Ulcinj and Rozaje. On average, 350 people per day make use of the telephones to contact their families.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Some 1,310 refugees crossed into Macedonia through Sunday and Monday (16-17 May), according to latest UNHCR figures. Meanwhile, the number of departures to third countries continues with 2,674 departures to Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Among these groups were 25 children from Tetevo with severe medical problems who have been in hospital or living with host families

and are bound for Germany and the United Kingdom. Latest figures from the Macedonian Red Cross show 131,956 refugees are now registered with host families.

Meanwhile disturbing reports are emerging of trains filled with refugees being turned back at the border. UNHCR has no clear information as to why disembarkation is being refused. According to unconfirmed international media reports aired today (Wednesday), up to 2,300 refugees crossed the border late yesterday and last night with most bused to the Senokos camp.

The UN Secretary General arrives today (Wednesday) to meet with Macedonian government leaders, UN agency and NGO representatives; he will also visit the Stenkovec I camp.

Health: The Red Cross medical team at the Blace border assisted refugees as they crossed last night, sending 48 people to the German Red Cross hospital at Stenkovec I/Brazda. There were no emergency cases.

Shelter: The refugee population in the camps has diminished recently, as over 50,000 individuals have left for third countries. UNHCR reports there is additional capacity for 17,000 refugees in existing camps, in the event of further influxes. The additional capacity by camp is as follows: 8,000 at Cegrane (which now has 31,600 refugees); 5,000 at Senokos (2,400); 2,000 at Neprosteno (7,500); 1,000 Stenkovec I/Brazda (13,800); and 1,000 at Stenkovec II (17,100).

Logistics: Dispatches from the Red Cross Red Crescent central warehouse on Friday through Tuesday (14-18 May) included: 4,575 mattresses, 4,475 hygiene parcels (donated by ECHO), 68 hygiene parcels (donated by the American Red Cross), 9,328 hygiene parcels (donated by the Spanish Red Cross), 2,000 hygiene parcels (donated by Swiss Red Cross), 5,298 standard hygiene parcels, 13 cooking sets, two 20 sq. metre tents, 16,000 pieces of soap for MSF, 1,500 sleeping bags, 23,240 bottles of shampoo to the hospitals at Brazda and Cegrane, 800 diapers, 420 litres of fruit juice, and 1,500 high protein biscuits.

Deliveries included: 5,450 mattresses, 360 blankets, 4,730 hygiene parcels (donated by ECHO), 1,404 hygiene parcels (donated by American Red Cross), 10,395 standard hygiene parcels, 4,680 hygiene parcels (donated by Swiss Red Cross), 5,299 hygiene parcels (donated by Spanish Red Cross); and 278 boxes of soap, 208 boxes of washing powder, 175 tents, 110 50-kg bags of flour, and 60 prayer mats (all donated by the Iranian Red Crescent).

Two pickup trucks for the Norwegian Red Cross hospital in Cegrane have arrived and are waiting customs clearance. Due to changes in arrangements for off-loading and transferring of goods for humanitarian assistance, there are increased difficulties in obtaining customs clearance at the Skopje airport. This is causing delays in the transfer of five laptop computers for the delegation and a relief shipment from the Jordanian Red Crescent.

Tracing: The Red Cross tracing agency has registered 692 vulnerable people (the majority of which are unaccompanied children, but also include elderly, physically and mentally disabled persons). There have been 368 families reunited.

Macedonian Red Cross: The Macedonian Red Cross (MRC) is working with UNHCR and the country's health ministry to finalize an agreement for primary and emergency health care for refugees living with host families. Through an interim arrangement, UNHCR reimburses local hospitals for emergency care and the MRC has a small budget for prescription medicines.

Participating National Societies: The American Red Cross has been assisting the MRC in expanding its warehouse capacity. Recently, a 2,000 sq. metre warehouse has been leased in Tetevo and four additional warehouse lease contracts for local branches are being negotiated.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Red Cross Red Crescent delegates had contact with the following media on Monday-Tuesday (17-18 May): an interview with the Ottawa Citizen (Canada) on the overall situation with refugees in the former Yugoslavia; a live interview with TSF Radio Noticias (Portugal) on the Portuguese goods received in Macedonia; a briefing for MIT/Hungarian press agency on the Palestine Red Crescent programme of psychiatric care and a broadcast interview with Swedish national radio.

Albania

Some 450,264 refugees are now living in Albania, with over 93,000 accommodated in the Kukës area. Across the country, some 291,700 refugees now live with local host families. Due to new registration procedures, the number of host families has dropped to 38,000.

Relief distributions: Albanian Red Cross distributions of food parcels are ongoing in all six designated districts: Shkoder, Durrës, Kukës, Fier, Elbasan and Tirana. To date, more than 51,000 refugee beneficiaries (of a total of some 75,000) have been assisted in the Tirana region, though host families have yet to receive their rations. During the past week food parcels and various relief items were dispatched and distributed as follows:

Items (FP = food parcel)	Unit	Tirana	Shkoder	Kukës	Fier	Elbasan	Durrës	Total units
French RC FP	6 kg	5,000	-	21,866	1,944	-	7,247	36,057
Spanish RC FP	10 kg	1,980	-	-	-	-	-	1,980
Swedish RC FP	10 kg	5,760	15,360	14,512	11,520	11,520	15,360	74,032
Wheat flour	mt	82.00	20	108	46.88	20	20	296.88
Blankets	pce	6,000	-	-	-	-	-	6,000
Hyg. kits	box	-	2,000	-	-	-	600	2,600

Negotiations are underway between the Red Cross Red Crescent and the WFP regarding future deliveries of wheat flour and the food pipeline as a whole.

Shelter: Albania's Emergency Management Group is providing a daily update of camp places available. A warehouse in Durrës has been identified for a new transit centre at Shkhozë, due to be ready in a week, with a planned capacity of 3,000 people.

In all, around 150,000 people live in various types of shelters - 85,880 in collective centres and 65,420, according to latest figures. The conditions in some of the collective centres are best described as basic and inadequate. Currently 33 shelter projects are under construction or being planned by various NGOs and other donors, targeted at providing accommodation (in the form of tents, rehabilitated buildings or pre-fabricated houses) for a total of some 173,000 people when all projects are finished.

Health: Camps in Durrës are reported to have water problems. An inventory of the Red Cross medical warehouse is ongoing. WHO, concerned about the mental health in the camps, is

considering a preventive programme focused on targeted groups and a clinical approach. An epidemic surveillance is ongoing. The delegation's medical coordinator is working closely with the Albanian Red Cross on the production of leaflets and brochures highlighting health issues.

Logistics: Nineteen trucks loaded with food and four Red Cross landcruisers arrived on 18 May at Durres port, in one of the two Red Cross ships transiting between Italy and Albania. The trucks, containing food parcels and wheat flour, are being dispatched today (Wednesday) to the six Red Cross Red Crescent field offices around the country, while those for Kukes were cross-loaded onto waiting vehicles. The convoys to Kukes are now being escorted by two landcruisers and approach Kukes flying Red Cross flags as a further security measure. Ten new trucks are in the pipeline and expected to arrive on Thursday.

Helicopter rotations between Tirana and Kukes are now reduced to two daily flights while delivery of a new, replacement helicopter is awaited; the present helicopter is due for routine maintenance.

A warehouse inventory has been completed and additional capacity rented. The new warehouse contains 5,532 square metres and the contract is ready for signature.

Tracing: In the month to date, the Red Cross tracing office has received 2,415 visits, facilitated 11,617 telephone calls and written 7,250 radio messages. Eighty cases of unaccompanied vulnerable persons have been opened, most of them concerning the lonely, elderly. Fifteen tracing cases have been opened and two closed. Ninety five parents who lost their children are registered together with 107 cases of unaccompanied minors. Some 116 cases of family reunion have been opened, while 22 are closed. Eleven Red Cross messages have been received and 10 dispatched.

Participating National Societies: The joint Netherlands and Belgian Red Cross team now has seven delegates in Vlore where a tented camp has been established and the first refugees arrived earlier this week. More than 320 tents (for eight persons) are being erected and the camp will have a planned capacity of 3,000, managed for the time being by the Red Cross. A second site is needed to fulfill the original project plan.

External relations Information and Publicity: A team of reporters sponsored by the Swedish Red Cross has arrived to prepare articles on the host family situation, distributions in Tirana, the Danish Red Cross camp in Lezhe and also a story on the work of one of the Swedish Red Cross nurses. Recent media contacts by Red Cross Red Crescent delegates include: APTN, BBC Radio 4, Helsingin Sanomat, McCall's Magazine, CNN, Associated Press, Reuters TV and CNN.

Outstanding needs: The food pipeline is still not fully operational, though volume is picking up. Last week (week 19) 51 per cent of the required food arrived in Albania, excluding the wheat flour still expected to be allocated by WFP, but not yet received. In the previous week, the delegation received 62 per cent of the required food, while only 46 per cent was achieved in week 17. In addition 14 delegate positions are still to be filled and a number of delegates will be completing their assignments before the end of June.

Kukes Report

The number of refugees currently entering Albania remains low - 20 new arrivals over the past two days and 3,483 moving south. The main thrust of the information campaign intended to convince refugees to move south is unchanged, with the concept of 'twinning' (moving a camp complete with staff and caseload) being perceived more favourably by the refugees.

At an interagency meeting yesterday, problems with the food pipeline were raised and some pressure was exerted on the Red Cross Red Crescent to fulfill its commitment to feed refugees and their host families in the Kukes communes.

During the past few days spontaneous food distributions to refugees by several agencies new to Kukes and Has districts has again become a problem. This practice is forbidden by the local authorities and has resulted in some confusion amongst the refugee population.

Relief distributions: On 18 May the present round of distributions in Kukes town ended, with the following figures: 37,605 refugees in host families and 1,790 host families received in total 18,679 French Red Cross food parcels, equivalent to a one week ration and 47.7 MT of wheat flour, equivalent to a 3.5 days ration. Some 9,000 beneficiaries who did not receive wheat flour at the first distribution last week, will receive their balance as soon as possible.

Health (*Focus on water and sanitation*): During the first six weeks of the emergency phase of the operation in Albania, the Red Cross Red Crescent provided NGOs with equipment and technical assistance in collective centres. The water and sanitation facilities in refugee collective centres have improved greatly, with most needs being met. In line with the new target group of Red Cross Red Crescent beneficiaries, since 5 May, the Red Cross Red Crescent has changed its water and sanitation emphasis, moving the focus away from the collective centres and into areas where there are concentrations of refugees living with host families in small villages and towns.

A major assessment has been conducted in target areas, covering nine villages and Kukes and Krume Town. The conclusions to date indicate that the sanitation facilities in the villages and towns surveyed are generally acceptable, but improvements in water facilities are required. Indeed, it is predicted by the water/sanitation delegate that water sources will dry up, or reduce dramatically, from July to September. The supply of water in Kukes town is causing concern and may affect the water system in the nearby camps. The wider difficulties identified by the assessments are currently being raised by the Red Cross Red Crescent with the UNHCR and local authorities, including the technical water board.

Meanwhile, the Red Cross Red Crescent water/sanitation delegate will continue with assessments in towns and villages hosting refugees in families. Kukes and Krume will also be provided, as required, with 4 MT and 1 MT of chlorine respectively. Stock levels will be maintained, including: bladder tanks; tap stands; plastic hoses; jerry cans and one/two trucks with water tanks to meet emergency needs. Technical and material assistance will also be given, if required, to the UNHCR and NGOs.

Logistics: Between 17 and 18 May the Kukes sub-delegation received 76.7 MT of French Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 3.8 MT of medical supplies. Additional warehouse space has been secured close to the helicopter pad, and work on the installation of a rubble hall is underway.

Tracing: The new ICRC protection and tracing office has been operational for three days, and with the assistance of a delegate from Tirana, the training of local staff and assistance given to refugees has proceeded to plan. On 17 and 18 May, the protection team visited the following camps: Italian Red Cross; the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent; MSF and Capanamur. Team members also visited Krume Town, Bardhori village and the Morine border. These field trips resulted in 1 request for a family reunification and 4 medical cases being opened. Over the same period, 1,151 satellite telephone calls and 632 radio messages were transmitted. The team also successfully closed a family reunification case on 18 May, where a 16 year old girl

was transported by helicopter to Tirana, and then by car to Berat, where she was reunited with her family.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: At the UN daily press briefing on 17 May, the Red Cross Red Crescent information delegate briefed journalists about activities carried out by the protection team. This led to enquiries from CNN, N-TV and the Daily Mirror newspaper and interviews with the Associated Press, the London Independent and Reuters. All interviews received coverage. Further interviews were conducted with the Washington Post, focusing on refugees living in host families, Project Spear for Radio Tirana, which highlighted the Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic and a Korean freelance photo-journalist interested in the relief operations.

Bosnia Herzegovina

Refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continue to arrive in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH). According to the latest UNHCR estimates, the total number of refugees from the Federal Republic moving to Bosnia Herzegovina stands at approximately 58,000. Over the past week, the number of refugee camps in FBH has increased from 15 to 22, including 7 collective centres, 11 transit centres and 4 tented sites, housing over 6,000 refugees. A further camp is being prepared at Rajlovac (15 km north-west from Sarajevo) with a capacity of 196 tents to accommodate some 1,200 people.

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