

24 May 1999

RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 34

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

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

In central Serbia, the regional Red Cross office in Kraljevo reports a current total of 16,853 refugees, 8,681 displaced and 9,480 socially vulnerable families seeking assistance in the 15 Red Cross branches/municipalities. In Vojvodina, there are 300,000 registered refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, including 42,000 Red Cross beneficiaries. In addition, the Red Cross has been approached by 176,000 refugees requesting assistance. Estimates from 35 Red Cross branches in the Nis/Zajecar regions indicated a registered total of some 5,000 displaced from Kosovo. In Montenegro, Red Cross figures for vulnerable groups stand at: 99,440 displaced from Kosovo, 614 displaced from other regions of Serbia, 32,142 refugees and 16,512 social cases.

Relief distributions: Dispatches have begun of 57,500 hygiene parcels for refugees from the Yugoslavia Red Cross central warehouse to regional centres. To date 17,432 parcels have been released to five of the 11 Yugoslav Red Cross regional logistics centres. The outstanding quantities for the March-April food distribution 125,000 refugees, comprising two trucks loaded with 21,840 kg of beans each and seven trucks with 22,680 litres of vegetable oil each, have reached their destinations.

In Pancevo, the manufacture of 2,000 cardboard boxes for packing emergency bulk food into family parcels - as part of an occupational therapy programme for mentally retarded children in Veternik - is underway, funded by the Red Cross.

Health: Three surgical sets, sufficient for treating 300 wounded, were delivered to the Military Medical Academy in Belgrade late last week. The assistance comes as the follow-up of the Red Cross medical survey, carried out two days earlier. On 21 May an evaluation of the medical needs in the 'Dragisa Misovic' hospital was carried out. Kragujevac hospital has received one surgical unit (for 100 wounded), as well as infusion bottles, sutures and antibiotics. The team bringing the assistance to the hospital also delivered 600 hygienic parcels to the local Red Cross branch.

In Montenegro, an assessment undertaken by a Red Cross water/sanitation engineer into the water situation in Ulcinj has established that it is now under control. In Rozaje, the collective centres sheltering displaced persons and refugees are receiving regular maintenance of the water supply and latrines built by the Red Cross.

Shelter: In Nis and Aleksinac, host families have provided shelter for most of the people who lost their homes, while 112 people are living in Red Cross reception centres.

Logistics: Around 7,800 baby parcels arrived in Belgrade on Friday.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Local media have given positive coverage to the ICRC preparations to send the first team to Pristina early this week. Several field trips have been carried out by Red Cross Red Crescent delegates to collect human interest stories and video material.

Delegations: At the end of last week, eight new ICRC delegates arrived in Belgrade; six are proceeding to Pristina today (Monday). The joint Red Cross field offices in Nis, Novi Sad and Belgrade have been equipped and will become operational in the coming days.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Large numbers of refugees are entering Macedonia once again. According to international media reports and data from the UNHCR, from Thursday-Sunday (20-23 May) about 18,000 refugees crossed the borders. By this morning (24 May), the total number of refugees in the camps was 88,800; over the past week, the refugee population at Cegrane has risen by 5,100 to 36,900, while the figures from Senokos camp reportedly show an increase of 4,100 and an occupation level of 6,500. This weekend's new arrivals mainly came by train from the Pristina-Urosevac area (where they had gathered after leaving the surrounding villages) and after crossing the border, traveled by bus to the Cegrane and Stenkovec camps. The chart below details arrivals into Macedonia 20-23 May:

	Arrivals	Departures	In Camps	Registered with MRC	Estimated Unregistered	Total
20 May	2,725	2,110	75,900	138,300	12,100	226,300
21 May	1,260	2,367	74,900	139,500	11,000	225,400
22 May	8,000	'866	83,900	139,500	11,000	234,400
23 May	5,750	'944	88,800	139,500	11,000	239,300
Total	17,735	5,343				

Sources: UNHCR, MRC (*estimates in italics*)

Meanwhile, the number of departures to third countries continues: in recent days, some 6,287 people have departed to Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. On the first flight leaving via Greece under the humanitarian evacuation program, 374 refugees flew Thursday 20, May to Australia from Thessaloniki, as part of a plan to expand departure capacity, in view of the congestion of Skopje airport.

Relief distributions: According to latest figures from the Macedonian Red Cross: 138,526 refugees are now registered in 24,694 host families, matching the current planning figure. The May distributions of hygiene parcels, blankets and mattresses are ongoing for refugees and their host families.

Health: The German Red Cross (GRC) continues to provide regular services to the population of Stenkovec I/Brazda and Stenkovec II camps, including handling two cases of tuberculosis (being tracked by WHO) who were sent to Skopje Lung Diseases Institute for diagnosis, the patients subsequently returned to camp and have started treatment under GRC.

Staff at the Norwegian Red Cross hospital at Cegrane remain very busy with the camp receiving its highest number of refugees over the past week. Water and sanitation facilities have improved, particularly the ratio of latrines to population. Last week's ratio was 1:100, well below the minimum required standard of 1:20; however, an average of 1.5 latrines are being added each day, and 50 more are due in the next week.

The medical tent used by the Turkish Red Crescent at Bojane camp has been provided with electricity and a refrigerator. The Society is now reporting epidemiological information to the World Health Organization. The water supply has been increased, showers are now functioning and sanitation is slowly improving.

Shelter: Camp facilities in Macedonia are being expanded and, in an ongoing effort to prepare for contingencies, the government has offered two new camp sites. One site, close to Cegrane camp, will have a capacity of 8,000 and can be extended to 11,000. The other site is located east of Tetovo and will be able to hold 4,000 to 5,000 people.

Logistics: Dispatches from the Red Cross Red Crescent central warehouse over the weekend included: 14,260 mattresses (donated by the Swedish Red Cross), 530 blankets, 2,259 standard hygiene parcels and 1,988 high protein biscuits. Deliveries included: 1,000 blankets, 17,060 mattresses, 4,158 hygiene parcels; and 2,500 packages of pasta and 2,500 kg. sugar (donated by Romanian Red Cross).

Tracing: The Red Cross tracing agency has registered 781 vulnerable people (the majority of which are unaccompanied children, but also include elderly, physically and mentally disabled persons). A total of 1,416 families made tracing requests through Sunday (23 May). There have been 327 families reunited.

Participating National Societies: After a preliminary assessment, the French Red Cross (FRCS) - which currently has assigned two expatriate delegates in country, with more expected - has initiated four projects, to be implemented in conjunction with the International Federation. Fresh food will be distributed to 45,000 refugees living in host families by the Macedonian Red Cross. Ninety percent of the food will be locally purchased, thus supporting the local economy which has been hard hit by the ongoing crisis in the region. There will be distributions of food for 10,000 babies living with host families.

In another programme involving cooperation with the French embassy, the National Society will provide information about psycho-social integration to those refugees leaving for France, and meet them on arrival. In addition, the FRCS has received a donation of 7,000 radios from a French company to distribute to host families. Although refugees in camps receive information from UNHCR announcements, reaching those in host families is more difficult. Now, they will be able to listen to Radio France International's Albanian language programme and other broadcasts. The plan envisages an allocation of one radio among four families, distributed through the Macedonian Red Cross.

The FRCS is also assessing the potential for primary health care and medicament programmes for refugees living in host families.

A team of American Red Cross tracing specialists arrived Sunday and will begin training at ICRC.

External Relations, Marketing and Publicity: Red Cross Red Crescent delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media over the weekend: RAI/Italian TV (Red Cross Red Crescent distributions to refugees in host families) and ABC News, and Vecer/Macedonian newspaper (tracing activities).

Albania

According to the latest available figures, there were 455,147 refugees in Albania on 21 May. The government reports that, approximately 68,000 refugees are being housed in camps, 31,000 in collective centres and the remainder with local host families.

Relief distributions: The Red Cross pipeline is on-stream and discussions are in progress with the World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure bread supplies for all refugees. The following dispatches took place on 23 May:

Destination	Commodity (FP=food parcel)	Quantity	Transport
Durrës	Swedish Red Cross FP	5,200	Three trucks
	Wheat flour	28 MT	One truck
Fier	French Red Cross FP	5,184	Two trucks
	Wheat flour	23.04 MT	One truck
Tirana	Swedish Red Cross FP	3,360	Two trucks

The WFP has a pipeline of 6,000 MT in the country and is now working on developing specific packages for new arrivals.

Health: The Finnish ERU basic health clinic in Shkoder treated 992 patients last week, the main health problems include respiratory infections (240), cardiovascular diseases (111), diarrhoea (51), skin diseases (38) and severe psychological disorders (37).

Due to the security concerns, the clinic has stopped the night shift as emergencies are covered by the other hospitals. Equipment has been donated to the maternity, the pediatric and the general hospitals. Further donations for the operating theatre and the laboratory at the General Hospital are under review, while an overall need has been identified in the hospitals for drugs for treatment of chronic diseases.

Several new camps in Durrës suffer from shortage of water, but there are indications the problem will be solved in the coming days. According to the county's Emergency Management Group, water containers on wheels have been released from customs and are now ready to be taken into use.

Logistics: The International Federation and ICRC are currently collaborating on the transition of logistics operations planned for 1 August 1999. A consignment of 24 much-needed trucks have been handed over to the Red Cross Red Crescent in recent days.

Two vessels docked at Durrës port over the weekend with: 30 trucks of French Red Cross food parcels and 52,000 Swedish Red Cross food parcels; eight trucks of hygiene parcels (4,128);

three trucks with 79 MT of wheat flour; one truck with 3,500 blankets; four forklifts; and two trucks of goods for the workshop and the fleet.

Tracing: Some 2,930 refugees have visited the tracing service so far this month, while 12,768 telephone calls have been facilitated by the tracing delegates for the heads of refugee families; 8,777 radio messages have been collected and submitted to radio stations for broadcasting, while there are 115 registered cases of elderly or sick people looking for their families. There are currently 105 cases of parents who have lost their children, and 121 cases of children separated from their parents; 201 cases of family reunion have been opened, while 24 families have been reunited. Five ICRC tracing teams are working throughout the country, and tracing activities are being carried out by the 36 Albanian Red Cross branches.

External relations, information and publicity: The Norwegian Red Cross desk officer for Albania arrived for a visit and review of operations at the end of last week. Meanwhile, local media have been giving extremely positive coverage of the Red Cross relief distributions in the Shkoder district. Red Cross Red Crescent delegates have provided interviews or briefings to the following media in recent days: BBC Radio, Reuters TV, Albanian News Agency International, the Swedish Red Cross media team, APTN and Time Magazine, AP TV, a freelance photographer from Sygma, (a Netherlands TV production company), Norbotten Kuriren, and the Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet.

Albanian Red Cross: The Albanian Red Cross continues to implement youth and social programmes, in addition to the twinning programmes between Albanian Red Cross and sister national societies. In Tirana, the Albanian Red Cross received a donation of 90,000 LEK from the Swiss Club and some French organizations in Tirana which arranged an event in the Cinema Palace. Albanian Red Cross volunteers are still working in the transit centre in the Sports Palace in Tirana, providing diapers and facilitating medical assistance for the refugees as well as requesting equipment for the disabled.

Kukes Report

This weekend the number of refugees crossing the border increased dramatically. On 21 May, 3,650 refugees, mainly women and children, arrived. Then on 22 and 23 May, to the surprise of the humanitarian agencies based in Kukes, a contingent of 1,124 new arrivals - all male, and in the age-range of 20 to 50 - entered the country. Most were in a fairly poor condition on arrival, both physically and mentally and, according to unconfirmed reports, thousands more refugees are waiting to enter.

The official movement of refugees into and out of Kukes from 21 to 23 May was as follows: 4,774 in and 5,267 out.

Relief distribution: Since the new phase of relief distributions started (on 5 May), the relief team is currently in the third week of its distribution process in Kukes town, which will conclude on 24 May, assisting a total of 39,395 beneficiaries. To date 29,630 beneficiaries (74 % of the total) have received 29,630 French Red Cross food parcels and 47.72 MT of wheat flour.

The supply of French Red Cross food parcels is now completed and is being replaced by similar items from the Swedish Red Cross, which weigh 10.6 kg (compared to the 5.4 kg French parcel). Due to the recent improvements in the capacity of the pipeline, it is hoped that, for the first time, future distributions will occur on a fortnightly basis in Kukes town.

A survey/monitoring exercise has been carried out by two Red Cross Red Crescent relief delegates in Krume in order to check the efficiency of the first round of distribution completed

(from 9 to 15 May) and to do a needs assessment for the second round of distributions, due to commence on 25 May. Their report concludes that, in addition to food items, there is also a need for non food items, such as hygiene kits. Consequently, in the next round of distributions it is intended that a hygiene parcel be provided for each refugee family living with a host family in the identified area, together with the usual provision of food items.

The same report indicates a growing number of displaced persons in the Krume district (about 5,000), however, only 150 are accounted for within Krume municipality, served by Red Cross Red Crescent.

Health: The Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic treated a total of 872 patients between 21 and 23 May. Over the period of 20 to 22 May, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Red Crescent hospital treated 995 patients, including 174 accident/emergency patients. Over the same period, the Italian Red Cross hospital treated a total of 518 patients, of which 243 were under 10 years old, 231 were between 10 and 60 and 44 were over 60 years old.

Logistics: Over the weekend, the Kukes sub delegation received 81.2 MT of Swedish Red Cross food parcels; 6.4 MT of French Red Cross food parcels and 20.4 MT of wheat flour by road and air. Secondary deliveries were made to distribution points in Kukes town, as follows: 29 MT of French Red Cross food parcels, 9.4 MT of Swedish Red Cross food parcels, 14.7 MT of wheat flour and 600 kgs of high protein biscuits.

Tracing: On 21 and 22 May, the Red Cross Crescent protection and tracing information office was again busy dealing with general inquiries, especially concerning visa and family reunification procedures. Over the same period, 997 satellite telephone calls and 192 radio messages were transmitted from the Kukes office, UAE Red Crescent camp, Italian Red Cross camp and Besimi Camp.

Delegation: The Kukes Red Cross Red Crescent sub delegation, (excluding the Finnish, Italian and UAE Red Cross Crescent personnel,) currently has 19 delegates, as follows: Head of sub delegation; ICRC team leader; six logisticians/warehouse/drivers; two protection delegates; four relief/relief administration delegates; a health coordinator (acting from Finnish Red Cross Society); a water/sanitation delegate; a reporting delegate; an information delegate and a finance delegate.

External relations, information and publicity: The Japanese TV station J Press was briefed on family reunifications/unaccompanied children, in preparation for a 10 minute documentary film featuring the protection team's work in the camps. Associated Press also conducted an interview focused on humanitarian assistance given to beneficiaries. Two Swedish Red Cross journalists will be covering this National Society's food parcel distributions and focused their trip on several distribution points in Kukes Town, also visiting the Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Over the past seven days, the number of refugees that have fled to Bosnia and Herzegovina has increased from 58,000 to approximately 72,000; needs are rising accordingly. Some 42,000 people have moved to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) and more than 30,000 to the Bosnian Serb Entity - Republika Srpska (RS)

According to the data received from Red Cross Red Crescent field offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 1,992 registered refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Zenica region. Of these, 120 are placed in collective centres, while the remainder are

accommodated in host families. The estimated number of non-registered refugees is 30% greater than the figure for registered refugees. While ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and Moslems from Sandzak are mostly coming to FBH, Serbs from the Federal Republic are entering the Bosnian Serb Entity - Republika Srpska.

According to the International Federation's field office in Trebinje (Eastern Herzegovina - RS), the total number of registered refugees in this region is 581 while the estimated figure for non-registered refugees is over 3,000.

Relief: Assistance has arrived from several sources: 1,000 food parcels from the ICRC, 200 hygiene parcels from the International Federation, 1,000 food parcels from a German humanitarian organization and 100 blankets from a Turkish donor. In Central Bosnia, 890 Federal Republic refugees received 900 food parcels, including 600 from the ICRC. Red Cross distributions of 540 individual parcels and 195 hygiene parcels are due to start in Eastern Herzegovina within the next few days. The Red Cross of Republika Srpska will also distribute 1,596 kg of milk-powder to 532 young refugees from the Federal Republic.

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