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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

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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 (Serbia)

Damage to power plants, water pipelines and various infrastructure over the past weekend have reportedly left major cities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis, as well as most of the countryside without electricity and water. Belgrade authorities report that the water reserves in the city currently stand at 10% due to power cuts and envisage setting up a system of water trucks to distribute water to the population.

An ICRC team, including head of delegation in Belgrade, head of sub-delegation in Pristina, health delegate, security delegate, constructor, administrator and field officers, left Belgrade for Pristina early on 24 May. Their primary objectives are to re-establish a functional office in Pristina, re-open a dialogue with the authorities and 'sound' the security environment.

A five truck convoy of food and other supplies arrived Tuesday. The immediate priority will be the immediate distribution of basic relief supplies to the population and the delivery of medical materials to hospitals.

Relief distributions: Some 4,000 m² of plastic sheeting were dispatched to Kraljevo earlier this week.

Health: Red Cross medical teams are supporting 11 hospitals in Serbia through emergency response and assessment activities. The Red Cross medical teams have also carried out assessments of damaged health facilities in Aleksinac, Nis and Belgrade. Arrangements are being made to provide generators for the dialysis department of Belgrade's 'Dr Dragisa Misovic' hospital and central blood transfusion institute.

Twelve Norwegian Red Cross surgical units have been distributed to hospitals in Vranje, Aleksinac, Novi Sad, Valjevo, Nis, Kragujevac and Belgrade, while five have been dispatched to Montenegro. Feedback from head surgeons regarding the quality and utility of the units has been very positive.

Some 105 dressing sets (including bandages, gauze pads, sterile covers sponges, cotton wool, skin disinfectant and scissors) have been delivered to medical posts handling minor injuries. These distributions have also included infusion necessities and antibiotics.

Supplies of blood bags and blood testing kits worth 90,000 DEM have been provided by the Red Cross for the use of blood transfusion institutes in Serbia. Additionally, the ICRC has donated to the Yugoslav Red Cross an ambulance equipped with defibrillator, sonograph, electrocardiograph, artificial respirator and emergency kit for doctors.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Montenegro)

The number of displaced in Ulcinj (southern Montenegro) is reported to have increased by 3,000 new arrivals last week, due to a steady influx from Rozaje (North). Red Cross figures for displaced in the Rozaje area currently stand at 17,400, while in Ulcinj 43,000 displaced persons have been registered since 29 March.

Relief distributions: A stock of emergency food and non-food stock is being positioned in Ulcinj with a view to rapidly reacting to any new influx. Food continues to be supplied to the kitchens of the various camps.

Health: Assessment of the Neptune camp shows an urgent need for garbage disposal and more latrines in the camp. The Red Cross health information office in Ulcinj reports that the majority of requests concern drug availability and transport for medical referrals. The health situation in the town is stable and the water/sanitation is under control. The water/sanitation situation in the north has changed from emergency to normal maintenance.

Shelter: The increase of displaced in Ulcinj has created some concern over shelter facilities. Although the availability of tents is not a problem for the time being, sanitation and kitchen facilities have to be considerably enlarged. Half of the new arrivals have been accommodated in collective centres.

Tracing: Last week, 2,600 people made use of telephone lines provided by the Red Cross. Three more phone lines have been requested: two for installation in the Neptune camp in Ulcinj and one to be made available for some 7,000 displaced accommodated in Plav. A number of displaced persons have approached Red Cross tracing offices to check the lists of names broadcasted by Albanian radio. Some 40 names have been collected for broadcasting.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

According to the UNHCR, two trains and 13 buses offloaded more than 8,500 refugees at the Macedonian border on Monday (24 May). After some delays, police agreed to move refugees from the border and the Blace holding area to camps. The majority of the arrivals were transported to the Stenkovec and Cegrane camps while the rest remained at the holding area. Registration of the arrivals proceeded very quickly, witnessed during the evening by visiting British and American delegations and the Macedonian interior minister, together with UNHCR staff.

	Arrivals	Departures	In Camps	Registered with MRC	Estimated Unregistered	Total
23 May	5,750	994	88,800	139,500	11,000	239,300
24 May	8,500	1,142	96,300	140,365	10,000	246,665
Total	14,250	2,136				

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

Relief distributions: On 25 May, in response to the significantly increased numbers of refugees arriving, a rapid response container was sent to the Red Cross border team at the Blace border area. The 20-foot container holds 1,500 blankets, 1,512 high protein biscuit packs, 2,016 1.5-litre bottles of water and one (6 x 50 m) roll of plastic sheeting.

According to latest figures from the Macedonian Red Cross: 140,365 refugees are now registered in 24,745 host families. The May distributions of hygiene parcels, blankets and mattresses are ongoing for refugees and their host families.

Health: At the request of UNHCR, the German Red Cross ambulance is available 24-hours/day for the next few days to transfer refugee patients from the Blace border camp to the Red Cross hospital at Stenkovec I/Brazda camp.

The team at the Norwegian Red Cross hospital at Cegrane camp are now being assisted by some 50 Kosovar refugees living in the camp, including 5 doctors, 3 midwives, 10 nurses and several translators. Last week there were 327 patient consultations (including 40 children), and seven births. Cegrane camp now has about 40,000 refugees, the largest population of all the camps in Macedonia. The hospital is restructuring to provide general medical care to the refugee population. A dentist facility will open this week.

Logistics: Dispatches from the Red Cross Red Crescent central warehouse on Friday-Sunday (25-26 May) included: 14,710 mattresses, 10,130 standard hygiene parcels, 20,000 pieces of soap, 6,000 packets of sanitary towels. Deliveries included: 6,000 blankets, 11,910 mattresses, and 2,079 hygiene parcels.

Tracing: A team of six American Red Cross tracing specialists have begun training at ICRC; technical preparations are being made for direct satellite uplink to the special website to help restore contact between members of families parted by the crisis in the Balkans

Macedonian Red Cross: Macedonian Red Cross volunteers are now present 24-hours/day at all the main border crossing areas (Blace, Jazince and Tabanovce) to assist refugees as they cross. The Society also has an ambulance stationed at the Blace border camp.

External Relations, information and publicity: Red Cross Red Crescent delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media on 24-25 May: briefing on Red Cross distributions to refugees in host families to RAI/Italian TV; interviews with TSF Radio Noticias on goods donated by Portuguese Red Cross, and British Sky TV on a pregnant woman transported from Blace border by a German Red Cross ambulance to the Red Cross hospital at Brazda camp.

Albania

According to latest government figures there are 459,485 refugees in Albania; more than 71,000 are living in tented camps, nearly 93,000 in collective centres and the balance of some 300,000 are with host families. Over the past week, around 9,000 refugees have been moved out of Kukes to elsewhere in Albania.

Relief distributions: In the Tirana region, distributions are continuing at a slow pace though the first rotation has now been completed. There are now 96,644 people living with host families in the region; of these, 65,711 beneficiaries have received a monthly ration, though host families have yet to be included in any distribution. Swedish Red Cross food parcels, with an additional 8 kg of wheat flour, were distributed in Tirana and in Lac.

Shelter: According to the information provided by the country's Emergency Management Group (EMG) shelter desk, there are 49 tented camps and 278 collective centres available in the country at present with a combined capacity of 345,202. Approximately half this capacity (163,115) is currently occupied. There are now 43 'child friendly spaces' in 13 Albanian cities.

Logistics: At Durres port yesterday (Tuesday), a boat docked with 21 trailers of foodstuffs - five with wheat flour, nine with family food parcels and seven with individual food parcels (total weight approx. 400 MT). A French Red Cross consignment of rice (43.4 MT), pasta (73.9 MT), sugar (19.9 MT), dried fruits (7.5 MT), tinned vegetables (45.MT) and sardines (9 MT) was also received.

Contracts have been signed by the Red Cross Red Crescent for a warehouse in Durres, with an available floorspace of more than 5,500 m2 available.

Trucks from the Department for Independent Development have been tasked by the EMG to undertake distributions to the field. All donors are being encouraged to utilise this and other 'gratis' transport services.

Tracing: The most recent figures for the tracing department are: visits to the tracing department (3,317); telephone calls made by refugees (14,422); typed radio messages (11,446); cases of unaccompanied vulnerable (141); tracing cases opened (29); tracing cases closed (4); cases of parents having lost children (114); cases of unaccompanied children (146); cases of family reunions opened (240); and cases of family reunions closed (25).

Participating National Societies: Representatives of the American Red Cross (stationed in Macedonia) were recently in-country for an assessment mission into the possible establishment of a project delegation to coordinate a 12-month programme of food parcel distributions to refugees in host families. A representative of the German Red Cross has arrived in Tirana to set up this Society's operational base in the capital. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Japanese Red Cross on its future activities in Albania is nearing completion.

External relations, information and publicity: The BBC (Radio 5 Live, Scotland and Radio Midlands) will shortly be carrying an item on family reunions in the Kukes area. Other recent media contacts have included the German magazine, *Focus*, Croatian national television and a briefing for a freelance documentary journalist who is working on a piece for Czech and Dutch audiences. A group of Swedish journalists traveled to Shkodra yesterday to cover relief distributions in the prefecture.

Delegation: Currently, the joint delegation comprises some 200 local staff at locations across the country and more than 110 expatriate delegates, including emergency response units.

Outstanding needs: With the transfer of logistics responsibilities to the International Federation on 1 July, additional logisticians are urgently needed. Over the coming week, in Tirana alone, distribution plans call for 27,884 food parcels and 223 MT of wheat flour. The operation received the targeted consignments of food parcels last week, but the supply of wheat flour is still below the quantities needed.

Kukes Report

While the potential for another major influx of refugees remains, humanitarian organisations are beginning to take note of the fact that the vast majority of the refugees are actually accommodated in host families - and, therefore, are turning their attention towards providing services to them.

This may be due to the fact that it is now clear that the collective accommodation is likely to be closed in the foreseeable future.

On 24 May, the movement of refugees increased, with the official figures as follows: 1,469 entering into Kukes; and 1,580 leaving Kukes. The new arrivals consisted of men, women and children. On 25 May, 223 refugees arrived, including 104 men. On the same day, 2,368 refugees departed for the south. Overall, on 24 and 25 May, a total of 1,692 crossed the Morine border, and 3,946 departed for the south. The UNHCR's concept of "twinning" (moving a camp complete with staff and caseload), is being positively perceived by the refugees and is being encouraged and facilitated by the Government.

Relief distributions: *Kukes Town:* The third round of food distributions was successfully completed on 24 May. As such, between 21 and 24 May, a total of 41,528 beneficiaries received either one French Red Cross food parcel (5.4 kg each) or half a Swedish Red Cross food parcel (one Swedish Red Cross food parcel weights 10.6 kg). In addition, 2 kg of wheat flour was also distributed to all beneficiaries. Consequently, a total of 225.7 MT of food parcels and 82.5 MT of wheat flour was allocated to 39,782 refugees and 1,746 host families.

This was the first attempt to distribute a two week food ration, and no significant problems were encountered during the four day exercise. Given the success of this distribution, the relief team will endeavour to make all forthcoming distributions for Kukes town on a fortnightly basis, with the next round of distributions scheduled to commence on 5 June.

Kukes Communes: On 24 May, two relief delegates made the following distributions at the village commune level: Fshat in Gayca e Cajë Commune, 696 kg of wheat flour and 87 Swedish Red Cross food parcels were given to 82 refugees and five host families; Bushtrice Commune, 539 French Red Cross food parcels and 824 kg of wheat flour were given to 142 refugees and 23 host families.

Health: Since Sunday night, staff at the Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic have been particularly busy treating many of the new arrivals. In addition to medical assistance, the clinic gave patients food parcels and hygiene kits. On 24 and 25 May, staff at the clinic treated 573 patients, of which 127 were under 6 years old; a further 62 children were inoculated. The Italian Red Cross field hospital, on 23 and 24 May, treated 309 patients, of which 133 were under 10 years old. The staff also organised three medical evacuations to Tirana.

Logistics: On 24 and 25 May, the Kukes sub delegation received 5,680 Swedish Red Cross food parcels weighing 6.25 MT; 2,364 French Red Cross food parcels weighing 11.8 MT and 48.4 MT of wheat flour by road and air. Secondary deliveries were made to distribution points in Kukes town, as follows: 586 French food parcels and 256 Swedish Red Cross food parcels.

Tracing/Messages: The main activity for the protection team on 24 and 25 May was the ongoing registration of the new arrival ex-detainees from Kosovo. Coordination between ICRC Tirana and the protection team at the Kukes sub delegation has been good, with the Tirana office informing relatives of the whereabouts and details of the former detainees. The protection team have also been advising the UNHCR, currently installing 18 satellite telephones in their Kukes office and at the MSF Camp, of best practise methods. The additional 36 satellite telephones should be operational in the next couple of days.

On 24 and 25 May, the following new cases/requests have been opened: seven Red Cross messages received; 5 family reunifications; 3 special tracing requests; 1 tracing request for an unaccompanied minor; 1 debriefing; 1 medical case passed to Tirana. On 23, 24 and 25 May,

1,516 satellite telephone calls and 672 radio messages were transmitted from the Kukes office and main square, the UAE Red Crescent camp and the Italian Red Cross camp. On 25 May a family reunification took place between a 15 year old boy and his mother, who was traced to a village north of Tirana. The unaccompanied minor was transported by the Red Cross Red Crescent helicopter to Tirana, then transported by vehicle to Kamez village.

Telecommunications: On 24 and 25 May, members of the Austrian Red Cross Telecommunications ERU were in Kukes to assist the sub delegation. The team has installed a back-up generator for the radio room, serviced the satellite telephones (including the mobile telephone team's) and reinstalled the fax machine.

As a result, all delegates, Albanian Red Cross and selected local staff now have VHF handsets. There are 4 satellite telephones in the office, a fax machine, nine computers (one with ccmail), six printers and a fully operational radio room, with pactor and a back-up generator. The radio communication systems are now also operational in Krume. Consequently, the basic communication needs in the sub delegation have largely been met, however, several more computers with the ccmail capacity, printers and additional satellite telephones are still outstanding.

External relations information and publicity: On 24 May, at the UN daily press briefing there was significant media interest in the arrival of the ex-detainees. A Red Cross Red Crescent delegate gave background briefings on the satellite telephones, radio messages and tracing activities. Interviews also took place with the following: National Public Radio on Red Cross radio messages; J Press (Japan), filmed children who are waiting for a Red Cross family reunification, CBC Radio-Canada (TV section) on the general background concerning radio messages/family reunions and Finnish Broadcasting Company, focusing on the Finnish Red Cross clinic. All interviews received coverage. Contacts were also made with the following: CNN, France Info, France 2, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Reuters; BBC, Associated Press; The Guardian and The Washington Post.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) continue to cross into Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). UNHCR reports that approximately 103,600 refugees have entered BiH since the current crisis began. Some 43,500 refugees have fled to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) and 60,100 to the Bosnian Serb entity - Republika Srpska (RS). Around 21,500 ethnic Albanians have fled to FBH as well as 21,300 Moslems from Sanz dak and 700 Serbs from FRY. More than 30,100 Serbs and 30,00 Croatian Serb refugees have fled to RS.

Shelter: Some 7,825 refugees are accommodated in refugee camps. The number of refugee camps has increased from one to 29, over recent days. There are now 17 refugee camps in FBH and 12 in RS, including 14 collective centres, 11 transit centres and four tented sites.

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