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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 37

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

On 27 May, the Second National Society Operation/Co-ordination Meeting took place at the International Federation in Geneva. Representatives from 22 National Societies, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, gathered to discuss the response of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to the crisis in the Balkans. Issues covered included the forthcoming revised appeal, medium-long term planning (including winterisation), and media/communications. The minutes from this meeting will be published shortly.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia)

The head of the ICRC delegation in Belgrade has returned from Pristina and provided an assessment of the situation there. One of the main problem facing the new delegation is the difficulty to find appropriate local staff to work within Kosovo. Six ICRC delegates are now based in the Pristina office and they have begun to re-establish contact with local authorities and have slowly started humanitarian operations. Emergency supplies for hospitals and civilians in need is a priority. Since 24 May, nine Red Cross trucks have brought vital relief supplies to Pristina. In Serbia, a field delegate based in Kraljevo will today (31 May) go to the northern Krusevac area to assess damage incurred after the Varvarin bridge was destroyed on Sunday 30 May.

Relief distribution: The following quantities of aid reached Yugoslavia last week: (25 May) Some 8,960 individual parcels; (26 May) 2,448 hygiene parcels and 3,900 baby parcels; (28 May) 4,480 individual parcels and 2,016 hygiene parcels.

Health : On 26 May, 15 surgical units and 400 medical and hygiene parcels were delivered to the main warehouse. On Thursday 27 May, an ICRC convoy arrived in the town of Cacak with substantial medical aid including a surgical unit, supplies of penicillin and dressing material. The association of multiple sclerosis patients received 70 hygienic parcels. This group is particularly vulnerable, since they cannot use elevators because of power cuts and are thus entirely housebound.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Montenegro)

The resumption of bus services between Kosovska Mitrovica and Podgorica has resulted in an increase in displaced persons from Kosovo. By Saturday 29 May, a total of 1,500 displaced have arrived in Rozaje since the beginning of the week. Most of them continued southwards towards Ulcinj, where 1,060 new arrivals were registered. The new arrivals put a further strain on the already limited shelter and sanitation capacity of the collective centres. The Neptune Camp currently houses an estimated 4,000 displaced.

Relief : Two trucks have arrived from Italy with relief items for the Montenegro Red Cross.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

According to the UNHCR, refugee arrivals into FYRO Macedonia have tapered off; about 2,900 refugees arrived on Thursday-Sunday (27-30 May). The Macedonian Red Cross, UNHCR and the local charity agency El Hilal, are preparing food, blankets, jerry cans and mattresses in the event of another large influx of new arrivals. Departures on Friday under the humanitarian evacuation program totaled 1,750, bringing the overall count to nearly 70,000. Destinations were Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Also on Friday, 105 refugees were transferred by bus from Blace, Stenkovec and Radusa camps to Albania.

Relief distribution: The Macedonian Red Cross reports: 145,307 refugees are now registered in 25,179 host families. May distributions of hygiene parcels, blankets and mattresses have been made to 98,087 refugees (including 7,210 babies) who are living with host families. The figures for May distributions to refugees living with host families (31 May): 47,218 hygiene parcels; 28,394 blankets; 24,793 mattresses and 14,138 hygiene parcels. Food distributions are completed for 261 branches. Distributions for Skopje, Kumanovo and Tetevo branches are continuing.

Health: A multi-agency task force met on 27 May, to discuss results of a recently completed assessment by CARE of reproductive health services available in the camps. The survey showed that while prenatal care, delivery and obstetrical services are adequately covered in the camps, services for babies and women victims of violence vary. Demand for family planning services appears very low and they are not routinely offered. The task force is drawing up a response to address the needs in the camps.

Shelter: There are now 110,000 refugees living in camps in the Macedonia. Cegrane camp is home for 42,600 refugees, there are 22,300 in Stenkovec II and 19,100 in Stenkovec I/Brazda. The UNHCR estimates, as of 28 May, that there are 250,400 refugees in Macedonia. The British government announced that it would provide funds for the construction of a new camp site at Vrapciste, which could host some 12,000 new refugees.

Logistics: Last week-end's deliveries to the International Federation's central warehouse included: 10,760 mattresses and 2,079 hygienic parcels; also vehicle service supplies: 1 drum (220 kg) BP Antifreeze, 3 cartons of brake fluid, 4 drums (720 kg) engine oil, 6 drums (468 kgs) various lubrications, 270 inner tubes of various sizes.

Macedonian Red Cross: Over the weekend the MRC/Federation delivered emergency supplies which were needed at the Blace border.

External Relations, information and publicity: Over the week-end Red Cross and Red Crescent delegates met with World News Link news agency and TSF Noticias/Radio Portugal.

Albania

The Emergency Management Group (EMG) reports that there are some 463,374 refugees in Albania.

Relief distributions: Deliveries made to the six (6) regional warehouses over the weekend included: 3,280 Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 2,592 French Red Cross food parcels to Tirana; 6,878 French Red Cross food parcels to Durres; 2,592 French Red Cross food parcels and 19.2 MT. of wheat flour to Fier; 2,592 French Red Cross food parcels and 19.2 MT of wheat flour to Elbasan; and 5,076 French Red Cross food parcels and 19.2 MT of wheat flour to Shkodra.

Health: The acting medical health co-ordinator traveled to Kruje and Mamuras (both northwest of Tirana) to look at the implementation plans for the Japanese Red Cross medical dispensaries.

Shelter: The latest numbers of refugees that are being accommodated in tented camps has risen by approximately 10,000 since last Wednesday, and now stands at 81,522. Figures for collective centres have risen very little now totaling 96,301. There are 305,667 refugees living with 38,293 host families throughout the entire country.

Logistics: Last week-end additional vehicles were added to the International Federation's fleet. There are currently 34 vehicles in the International Federation's Albanian fleet: 17 LandCruisers; 10 ambulances; 6 station wagons; and 1 minibus van. The Super Puma helicopter arrived and was put into service immediately on the weekend. Five heavy goods trucks also arrived.

The warehouse stock in Durres is as follows: used clothing (8530 kg); jogging suits (3,431); milk powder (14,040 kg); oil (57,852 litres); sugar (39,950 kg); tinned beef (49,872 tins); Meals Ready to Eat (91,064); hygiene parcels (10,278); mattresses (3,087); stoves (619); and blankets (3,325).

Planes chartered by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent have today (31 May) left Abu Dhabi and Athens for Tirana. They carried a total of 38 MT of food, medical supplies and tents.

Tracing: The number of people visiting the tracing office averaged 181 a day last week, up from 116 a day the previous week. There are now several contact lists available for public inspection--including updated lists of unaccompanied children in Macedonia and Albania, parents who are looking for children and the names of the men arriving in Kukes from Smrekovnica in Kosovo. The number of unaccompanied children continues to increase on a daily basis. On May 29, the number registered was 151--compared to 41 on May 1. Similarly, the number of unaccompanied vulnerable rose from 20 on May 1 to 155 by May 29. The number of parents who have lost their children rose from 43 to 117.

The latest statistics from the tracing department show that by May 29, 19,663 heads of family had used the satellite telephone services to make first contact with their relatives; 13,376 radio messages had been typed and submitted to the Albanian language services of Radio Tirana, BBC, Deutsche Welle, RFI and Voice of America.

Electronic messages continue to inundate the newly-installed web site. More computers and staff will soon become necessary to cope with growing demands.

Albanian Red Cross: Albanian Red Cross staff at the warehouses around the country have received training from a logistics delegate in warehouse management.

Participating National Societies: A delegation from the German Red Cross, including the Secretary General and the Head of the International Department, arrived and visited the German camp at Korce in the southeastern part of the country.

The Italian Red Cross and France Humanitaire are the only two organizations who continue to handle the increasingly higher number of medical evacuations. Three new regional co-ordinators have joined the Albanian Red Cross (ARC).

External relations, information and publicity: Family reunions continue to capture the attention of the media and the viewing/listening/reading audiences. CNN followed a delegate to a family reunion, and interviews on the subject were given to People Magazine, Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian television), Spanish television, JPress (Japanese press agency) and Netherlands National Television.

Kukes Report

Overview: Over the week-end, the official movement of refugees was as follows: 28 May, 425 entering into Kukes, 2,200 leaving Kukes; 29 May, 392 (men) entering into Kukes, 1,263 leaving Kukes; 30 May, 157 entering into Kukes, 1,786 leaving Kukes.

On 29 May, the first Interagency co-ordination meeting was held between organisations involved in delivering services to refugees and host families. The Government Prefect and the Minister Plenipotentiary singled out the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, praising it for its activities.

Relief distribution: The second round of food distributions in Krume Municipality continues. From 28 to 30 May, 2,667 refugees in host families and 285 host families received 2,952 Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 294 hygiene kits. This ration is intended for one month. During the last distribution exercise, a one month ration of wheat flour was distributed to ensure an overlapping period of a fortnight between the two items. This is intended to ease the handling of different food items, enabling distributions to occur every two weeks.

Logistics: Over the week-end, the Kukes Sub-delegation received 8,720 of Swedish Red Cross food parcels, weighing 9.6 MT; 8,480 French Red Cross food parcels weighing 4.25 MT and 13.7 MT of wheat flour. Secondary deliveries were made to distribution points in Kukes town, as follows: 668 French Red Cross food parcels, 2,350 of Swedish Red Cross food parcels and 4.5 MT of wheat flour.

Tracing: The Protection Team is increasingly busy following-up cases they have registered in the Kukes and Has Districts, and cases that have been forwarded from other teams in Albania. The success rate for these cases is generally very good. Over the same period, the team have also opened the following new cases/requests: 4 Red Cross messages received; 3 family reunification requests; 14 special radio messages; 1 tracing request for an unaccompanied minor and 1 request for an abandoned elderly person; 1 special tracing request and 1 debriefing. Over the same period, 508 satellite telephone calls and 644 radio messages were transmitted from the Kukes Office and Main Square, the MSF camp, the UAE Red Crescent camp and the Italian Red Cross camp II. The 18 new UNHCR/British Telecom satellite telephones installed at the UNHCR office are now fully operational.

Health: There are no major problems with the general health situation of the refugee population in the Kukes area. The need for replacement staff in the clinics continues and discussions are being held to obtain replacement staff for the Finnish Red Cross Clinic, currently the clinic only has 6 doctors to work the 24 shift.

On 28, 29 and 30 May, the Finnish Red Cross basic health clinic treated a total of 587 patients. They also inoculated 66 children against polio and measles. From 27 to 29 May, the Italian Red Cross field hospital treated a total of 495 patients, of which 207 were under 10 years old. During the same period they also organised the medical evacuation of 2 patients.

External Relations, information and publicity: Visitors in connection with USAID/ARCS, came to the Sub-delegation on 28 May and received an extensive briefing on the Red Cross Red Crescent relief activities. The following day was spent with the Albanian Red Cross, visiting refugees living with host families in Kukes. At the invitation of the Director of TV Kukes, the Head of Sub Delegation, the ICRC Team Leader and Albanian Red Cross Tirana Representative gave a half hour presentation on the Red Cross Red Crescent Activities in the Kukes prefecture. The following interviews were also conducted: USA Today, the television section of CBC radio-Canada, and Associated Press, all featuring tracing/family reunification; The Independent, featuring refugees living with host families; Finish Broadcasting, featuring family reunification and the work of the Finnish clinic; The Liberation, featuring the ICRC Principles and Mandate and TV Kukes, featuring relief distributions in Krume. Contacts were also made with a freelance British photojournalist and Associated Press.

Summary: The likelihood of a major influx of refugees remains.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Struggling with its own problems Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) continues to open its doors to the refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). A reported 104,000 refugees have fled to BiH since the beginning of the Kosovo crisis. Less than 10% of them are accommodated in refugee camps, while other refugees found the accommodation with host families.

Relief distribution: The Federation has allocated CHF 5,791,795.00 for the purchase of relief supplies and services in BiH. Some 50,000 refugees will benefit from the six month supply of goods. Funding will be used for the purchase of among other necessities; Food parcels (CHF 3,669,128.00), Hygeine parcels (CHF 356,928.00); blankets(CHF 414,960.00). Other purchases include tea, sugar, baby porridge and rice.

An assessment of the expenses and basic needs of FRY refugees in BiH, made by the Ministry for Civil Affairs and Communications (MCAC) of BiH found that the average monthly expenses are 320 DEM per person. The break down for this amount is : 150 DEM for food, 65 DEM for accommodation and utilities, 30 DEM for hygienic needs, 10 DEM for social and child care (complementary feeding of children and pregnant women), 20 DEM for education, 40 DEM for health protection and 5 DEM for management.

Shelter: Some 2,500 refugees are currently accommodated in tents, and MCAC is estimating that at least 3,000 additional refugees are expected to be accommodated in tents in the near future if the influx of refugees continues at the same rate. BiH authorities are considering the construction of six winterised Reception-Asylum Centres in BiH. According to estimates, the construction of six reception centres, including the infrastructure, should cost 11 million DEM. Besides these costs, MCAC emphasises that 400 DEM are initially needed for each new refugee arriving in BiH, who requires accommodation in tented camps.

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