

ALBANIA: REFUGEE INFLUX FROM KOSOVO

8 September 1998

appeal no. 17/98

situation report no. 05/98

period covered: 26 July to 28 August 1998

With an estimated 13,000 refugees having now entered Albania from Kosovo since the beginning of June, and the total number expected to reach 15,000 by the end of the year, the International Federation launched a revised appeal on 28 August seeking to extend its programme of assistance to 31 December 1998.

The context

On 29 May heavy fighting broke out in south west Kosovo, particularly around the towns of Decani and Djakovic, provoking a mass movement of the majority ethnic Albanian population. Over the course of the next few days, some 8,000 people arrived in the northern region of Tropoje - one of the poorest in Albania. An estimated 13,000 refugees have now entered Albania, with the overwhelming majority women, children and elderly people.

Some 6,500 refugees are staying in the Tropoje district near the border with Kosovo, while 6,100 refugees have left the border areas and are now living in and around the cities of Tirana and Dures and in ten other districts. The burden on the local population has been enormous, with the refugees accommodated in the homes of the local people, a situation which in the long term is unsustainable.

Immediately following the initial influx of refugees in June, the Albanian Red Cross (ARC)/International Federation distributed relief items from pre-placed stocks in Tirana. Following an assessment mission, the Federation launched an emergency appeal on 11 June seeking CHF 3,223,000 on behalf of the ARC to fund a relief operation to meet the basic food and hygiene needs of 10,000 people for four months until 31 October. On 28 August a revised appeal was launched, seeking an additional CHF 1,556,000 to support 15,000 beneficiaries for two more months until the end of December.

Latest events

Following intensified fighting, since the beginning of August, an estimated 200,000 people are now internally displaced in Kosovo. Although much of the fighting has taken place along the border with Albania, only about 600 new refugees have managed to cross into Albania since 14 August and were immediately assisted by the ARC/Federation and UNHCR. Refugees from Kosovo are also crossing the border into Albania from Montenegro after fighting restarted on 19 July around the villages of Orahovac and Malisevo.

As NATO commenced a week long series of military exercises in Albania on 17 August, security continued to be a major concern in the border area. Shelling near the village of Pradesh in Tropoje

district caused the inhabitants to temporarily evacuate. Banditry continued to pose a threat to the safety of aid agency personnel involved in the relief operation in Tropoje, and most foreign staff have now been evacuated from Tropoje. The Albanian Red Cross continues to be represented through the local branch.

Local families are now increasingly evicting their refugee guests, as the strain of accommodating such large numbers proves intolerable. The commune of Tropoje and others surrounding it have reached saturation point and over 6,000 refugees have already left to settle in other parts of Albania. The Red Cross is assisting those refugees who have left the Tropoje area, although local authorities have not taken steps to register them officially. Local Red Cross branches report 3,500 refugees in Durres, 1,414 in Tirana and 1,270 in ten other districts.

Amidst increasing security concerns, the International Federation issued a call for action on 14 August urging that refugees be moved out of the northern districts and accommodated in safer more accessible areas to the south. UNHCR is now planning to accommodate 1,200 refugees outside the Tropoje district in converted accommodation in Shkoder, Durres and Burrel.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The ARC/Federation relief operation began in Tropoje on 2 June with a pre-placed emergency stock. To date, ARC/Federation have distributed over 500 tons of food and non-food relief items.

Items distributed since 2 June 1998 (Albania)

Commodity	Quantity
Food Parcels	8,452
Flour	220 MT
White beans	23.7MT
Pasta	8.8 MT
Sugar	18.7MT
Rice	10.7 MT
Vegetable oil	20.2MT
Salt	0.213 MT
Hygiene parcels	6,372
Washing powder	10.9MT
Soap	16,923 bars
Mattresses	5,779
Blankets	5,291
Towels	1,348
Shampoo	3,128 bottles
Toothpaste	2,568 tubes

With Federation assistance, the ARC is preparing leaflets and posters to implement a public information campaign, informing refugees of the need to be registered on arrival in Albania and to approach local Red Cross branches at their final destination anywhere in Albania for assistance.

At the end of August a revised appeal was launched extending the Federation's programme of assistance until the end of 1998 and increasing the number of beneficiaries to 15,000 for the last two months of the year, in line with estimations of the total number of refugees expected.

The revised appeal also incorporates a programme of support for the most vulnerable amongst the estimated 5,000 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo who have entered the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The majority are women and children staying with relatives and friends whilst the fighting in Kosovo continues.

In response to an increasing number of calls for assistance from these families, the Macedonian Red Cross issued guidelines to its branches on how to process these requests. A system for information collection, vulnerability assessment and the offering of assistance has been set up. At present the National Society is assisting approximately 30 families (some 200 people) with food and non-food items from pre-placed emergency stocks.

Distributed during August 1998 (FYR Macedonia)

Commodity	Quantity
Flour	55 kg
Beans	24 kg
Sugar	17 kg
Rice	10.7 MT
Oil	17 litres
Baby food	27 pcs
Washing powder	13 packages
Soap	48 pcs
Mattresses	16 pcs
Blankets	56 pcs
Towels	24 pcs
Shampoo	16 pcs
Toothpaste	28 pcs
Plastic bags	32 pcs

Outstanding needs

The revised Appeal seeks an additional CHF 1,556,000 to cover the period up to the end of December 1998. Funding is needed for the purchase of 30,000 individual food parcels, 30,000 hygiene parcels, 5000 blankets, 5000 mattresses and for winter clothing and shoes.

Of continuing concern to the International Federation is the urgent need for the relocation of refugees out of the Tropoje district, due to dangers posed by local bandits as well as the fear of fighting spilling over the border. Collective centres must be found as soon as possible to relieve host families of the heavy burden of supporting refugees, and also to allow assistance to be delivered during the winter months in more accessible areas.

The need for the Albanian Office of Refugees to register refugees outside Tropoje district is also becoming increasingly urgent.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The ARC/Federation continue to maintain close contact with other agencies active in the area. Coordinated distributions of non-food items continue with UNHCR, while the ARC/Federation has distributed WFP wheat flour and oil in Tropoje.

Security concerns in the Tropoje district have prompted the ICRC to temporarily withdraw from Tropoje until the stand-off between the government and bandits is resolved. However, tracing activities have been established through Red Cross messages and radio announcements, while medical equipment and minor surgery kits have been distributed to local hospitals. Detention visits have also resumed having been suspended during the initial refugee emergency. Preparation for the dissemination of International Humanitarian Law is also underway.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

At the present rate of influx, it is expected that some 15,000 refugees will have entered Albania from Kosovo by the end of the year. The Federation's revised appeal responds to this predicted increase in the number of beneficiaries, envisaging support to 15,000 people by the end of the year. Coordinated distribution mechanisms are being set up for the on-going operation between the central warehouse and those branches assisting refugees, with ration and beneficiary cards being produced to facilitate beneficiary identification and selection. The security of refugees and aid agency staff alike remains a major concern for the International Federation, especially in the Tropoje district. Unless the government is able to resolve the situation, this could have serious implications for the aid distribution process.

Although the number of ethnic Albanians entering FYR Macedonia remains relatively stable, with the passage of time vulnerability amongst this group is expected to further increase, and the Federation is supporting the National Society to provide relief, social and medical assistance to a limited number of beneficiaries. This support is included as a new element in the Federation's revised appeal.

For more information, donors are invited to contact Penny Elghady, Desk Officer on tel: ++ 41 22 730 4450, email: elghady@ifrc.org

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ALBANIA REFUGEES FROM KOSOVO

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 17/98

PLEDGES RECEIVED

08/09/98

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL----->		6,126,000		
AMERICAN - RC	2,000 USD	3,070	03/07/98	
AUSTRIAN - RC/GOVT	1,000,000 ATS	119,274	30/07/98	
BRITISH - RC		39,749	26/06/98	
CANADIAN - RC	1,000 CAD	1,203	17/06/98	
DANISH - RC	500,000 DKK	109,200	17/06/98	
DANISH - RC/GOVT	1,000,000 DKK	220,900	31/08/98	
ECHO	500,000 XEU	819,450	29/07/98	
FINNISH - RC	500,000 FIM	137,250	25/06/98	
ICELANDIC - RC		4,884	14/07/98	
ICELANDIC - RC	2,000,000 ISK	41,544	28/06/00	
IRISH - GOVT	50,000 IEP	104,580	16/07/98	
GERMAN - RC/GOVT	50,000 DEM	41,485	18/06/98	
NETHERLANDS - RC	375,000 NLG	276,049	03/07/98	EARMARKED FOR GOODS/OPS COSTS
NETHERLANDS RC/GOVT	250,000 NLG	184,033	20/07/98	EARMARKED FOR GOODS/OPS COSTS
NORWEGIAN - RC	2,204,163 NOK	436,607		
POLISH - RC	1,000 USD	1,500	28/08/98	
SWEDISH - RC/GOVT	200,000 SEK	38,400	18/06/98	
SWEDISH - RC/GOVT	800,000 SEK	152,800	01/07/98	
SWISS - RC		50,000	19/06/98	DISTRIBUTION COSTS
KUWAIT - RC	45,000 KWD	219,366	17/06/98	
LIECHTENSTEIN		10,000	03/08/98	
MONACO - RC	60,000 FRF	14,844	28/07/98	
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	64,422 USD	96,633	22/08/98	DIRECT TO UAE OFFICE
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH		3,122,820	CHF	

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
AUSTRIAN - RC/GOVT		5,000,000	ATS	591,370		
DANISH - RC		500,000	DKK	109,200	17/06/98	HYGIENE PROGRAMMES
GERMAN - RC/GOVT		429,750	DEM	357,509	17/06/98	HYGIENE/FOOD/ BEDLINEN

SWEDISH - RC/GOVT	800,000 SEK	153,600	17/06/98	MATTRESSES
SWISS - RC		300,000	19/06/98	FOOD PARCELS/CLOTHING KITS
United Kingdom	Delegates	4,342	30/06/98	Estimated contribution
United Kingdom	Delegates	15,364	30/06/98	Estimated contribution
Norway	Delegates	35,237	30/06/98	Estimated contribution
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES		1,884,155	CHF	