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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 10

This report is published daily 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

The President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Dr Astrid N Heiberg and the President of the ICRC, Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, arrived in Skopje last night on the first leg of a two day visit to Red Cross / Red Crescent operations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. They were welcomed to Macedonia by National Society President Mr Ilija Cvetanoski. Today began with briefings at the respective ICRC and International Federation delegations followed by a visit to the Brazda camp - currently housing some 25,000 refugees - and informal sessions with Red Cross staff and volunteers. There, the two Presidents met staff and patients at the German Red Cross field hospital, including a mother with six children. The Presidential group then moved onto the ICRC tracing unit for a briefing on the burgeoning efforts to bring broken families back together. Then, it was on to the camp's water purification station which is producing 100,000 litres of clean water per day; both Presidents sampled the output. Before departure for Tirana, the Presidents were received by the country's President, Kiro Gligorov and Prime Minister Ljubo Georgievski. There was extensive media interest in the visit, including interviews with CNN, BBC, Sky, the wire services and news correspondents from donor countries.

During the one-day operational meeting of 14 National Society representatives in Geneva which took place on Tuesday, 13 April, the Presidents of the Albanian Red Cross (ARC) and the Red Cross of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia both addressed the meeting. Both appealed for co-ordination of relief deliveries, urging donors to work through Geneva. Dr Shykyri Subashi of the ARC said there were now 310,000 refugees, scattered throughout Albania: "There is not a town without refugees". This dispersal, he said, made logistics very difficult. More than half are with families, the rest in centres, often exposed to the elements. All 36 ARC branches are taking part in the relief effort, helping distribute goods that include, up to 9 April, 19,200 food boxes and 65,000 blankets. President Ilija Cvetanoski of the Red Cross of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia put refugee numbers at 130,000 -- 90,000 in host families in northwest Macedonia, the rest in camps awaiting relocation. He drew delegates' attention to the need to consider aid to local social cases, to decrease developing social tensions. In addition to logistics and coordination issues, the meeting also addressed tracing and reunification questions and relations with NATO and UNHCR. Due to transportation difficulties the Yugoslav Red Cross was unable to reach Geneva in time, but the Society sent a message outlining the assistance programme to help all victims, in conformity

with the Movement's principles. These include half a million earlier arrivals from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Society holds daily meetings with the ICRC and Federation Heads of Delegations.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

As part of its medical programme aimed at helping the medical structures, the ICRC has handed over 8,500 blood bags and 3,000 diagnostic blood tests to the to the Yugoslav Red Cross. This assistance will be distributed to blood transfusion centres in Serbia.

Following the initial transfer to the Yugoslav Red Cross of emergency stocks for 60,000 people (which included 125 tonnes of food, in addition to blankets, jerry cans, candles and some first-aid kits) immediately after the air-strikes began, last week the ICRC sent two convoys to the Aleksinac area, with 5,000 blankets, 2,000 m² of plastic sheeting and some 350 blankets. An additional 2,000 m² of plastic sheeting to temporarily replace broken windows, as well as 420 blankets will be dispatched to the same region by the end of the week.

The Red Cross branch in Vojvodina reported 978 IDP's in 12 Red Cross branches from Kosovo. They are reporting additional needs for baby food, milk powder and diapers for refugees and social cases.

Fuel remains in constant need for the ongoing operations.

The Red Cross branch in Kragujevac estimates that around 3,000 IDP's have arrived from Kosovo over the last 20 days. This branch also assists the most vulnerable among 4,500 registered refugees from Bosnia and Croatia in this region. In addition, the branch is providing food and clothing for approximately 20,000 socially vulnerable members of the local population.

Also there is an increased need for support to the soup kitchen programme (currently feeding over 3,000 people), due to the rising social needs.

There is also a clear need for a telephone counseling service in each region (similar to the one set up by the Belgrade Red Cross) to assist the local population and to provide practical information about Red Cross assistance. The 300 Red Cross Volunteers already trained in the Federation's Social Welfare programme will prove invaluable in this endeavour.

Montenegro

A new wave of 5,100 IDP's has started arriving in Rozaje since Saturday 10 April, bringing the total number of registered arrivals in Rozaje to 51,000 persons.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

An expanding number of national staff (up from 7 to 20) and newly arrived expatriate staff have been boosting the capacity of the Red Cross tracing service to cover all 6 camps, more individual cases, Red Cross Messages (RCM's), and improve reception. Cooperation between Red Cross tracing teams is increasing by the day as procedures and work methods are established and shared by all staff.

The collection of Red Cross messages is underway, notably in Bojane and Stenkovic camps, and third countries. However, many adults seem to know where their relatives have gone, in addition to the adults who already had contact with relatives abroad before the war. A number

of people coming out of Pristina town or area had access to mobile phones during the first days, but these were cut off a few days ago.

Tracing requests, which for practical reasons had so far been limited to children, have now been expanded to vulnerable individuals, such as elderly persons who are alone, the physically or mentally handicapped, hospitalised persons and pregnant women.

Albania

Tracing

Surveys for assessment of tracing needs were carried out in the past week in the towns of Shkodra, Shengjin, Lezhe, Lac, Elbasan, Tirana and Korçë where Albanian Red Cross volunteers are collecting names for the radio broadcasts and newspaper announcements. As an example, Korçë received around 12,000 refugees from the Blace camp at the Macedonian border on 6 April, with many separated families.

Telephone Network

In Kukës and Krumë, close to 300 families have made calls to their families on the Red Cross sat-phones. This service will be extended as 20 new sat-phones have arrived in Tirana on 12 April. Also, a short test on 12 April in Tirana made possible 40 calls in two hours on a cellular phone, an instant service which could be offered at least in those towns situated in the coastal lowlands of the country.

Media.

Four radio-stations are currently broadcasting the Red Cross collected namelists of refugees who have safely arrived in Albania: Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, Radio Tirana and as from 12 April also the BBC. Four Albanian daily newspapers publish the same namelists and discussions are under way with the Albanian National Television.

OUTSTANDING NEEDS

Significant logistics problems are still being encountered. The International Federation and the ICRC advise National Societies that no further unsolicited donations can be accepted by the operation. All donations must be co-ordinated with the Geneva logistics unit.

**Contact names and numbers: Charles Bernimolin, Federation, and John Wert, ICRC, at:
Phone: 041 22 730 2143 or 041 22 730 2204;
Fax: 041 22 733 9460;
email: fedicrcbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org).**

For further information from the International Federation, please contact Mark Wilson (tel: +41 22 730 4439; mobile +41 79 406 1963, email: wilson@ifrc.org) for Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Penny Elghady (tel: +41 22 730 4319; mobile +41 79 205 1959, email: elghady@ifrc.org) for Albania and Macedonia.

For further information from the ICRC, contact External Resources Department (tel: ++ 41 22 734 6001) or Pierre Kraehenbuehl (tel: ++ 41 22 730 2256, email: pkraehenbuehl.gva@icrc.org)

Renny Nancholas
Director
Europe Department
International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies

Angelo Gnaedinger
Delegate General for Europe,
Middle East, and North America
ICRC