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## **RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION**

*Report No. 24*

*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](http://www.ifrc.org) and [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)*

### **LATEST EVENTS**

#### ***Federal Republic of Yugoslavia***

The Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) has received 22 MT of food oil at its central warehouse in Belgrade. This is the second shipment of 750 MT of food from the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO).

The Novi Sad, Sombor, Subotica, Pancevo and Vrsac Red Cross branches (Vojvodina region) have all carried out intensive first-aid training courses for the local population. The Red Cross branch in Vrsac has made a short first-aid video, which is broadcast on local television twice a day. In Vrsac courses are also given by three teams of YRC instructors, aimed primarily at people who reside in big apartment blocks and those who live in areas hit by air strikes.

In the Kragujevac region, throughout April, distributions continued for the 1,400 refugees in the town of Paracin. The Red Cross branch in Paracin provided aid for 250 beneficiaries at soup kitchens, and regularly visited the elderly and children in shelters, where they offered psychological counseling and social aid, as well as basic food items.

Within the ambit of the Service for Psycho-Social Support, four different pamphlets dealing with stress-related problems have been distributed to local radio and TV stations.

In Montenegro, the number of displaced people appears to have waned slightly. While Ulcinj has received 2,600 new arrivals, figures are much lower at Rozaje (250 new arrivals) and Tuzi (350). On 1 May, 117 displaced had come from Kosovo. Departures from Rozaje continue, albeit at a slower pace than during the previous two weeks. Most departures are for Albania (via Tuzi) Ulcinj and Sarajevo. The Crisis Board in Ulcinj has registered 35,600 persons since 29 March. Security in the Morino area remains volatile.

Accommodation in Rozaje has improved, after the conversion by the ICRC of the coal shelter to house displaced from Decor.

Kitchens in the camps are running smoothly, with daily deliveries of food. Beneficiaries receive bread and tea every morning, while the daily meal is made up essentially of pasta and beans. Hygiene parcels have been distributed to all of the collective centres in Rozaje, for a total of 3,550 displaced.

Some 100 - 200 internally displaced come to the ICRC Ulcinj office every day with questions on visa applications to third countries, or on the whereabouts of relatives detained in Kosovo or in hospitals in Pec and Pristina.

### ***Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***

The number of new refugees streaming into FYROM continues to increase on a daily basis. The UNHCR reported over 11,100 new arrivals yesterday (3 May). About 5,700 were accommodated in the transit centre at the Blace border crossing (where the total number of people is now 9,100), the two Stenkovec camps received 1,000 persons each, the smaller camps (Neprosteni, Radusa, Bojane) received 250-300, while the new Cegrane camp received over 2,500.

Red Cross delegates visiting the Cegrane camp on Monday witnessed hundreds and hundreds of people camped out in the open, waiting for tents to be erected. The speed with which new refugees are arriving has prevented camp officials from properly preparing the terrain, raising concerns about drainage when the first rains fall in the camp. The new arrivals had to spend Monday night sleeping on plastic sheeting without cover.

Meanwhile, the number of departures to third countries continues. On Sunday, (2 May), 397 persons departed to France, the Netherlands and Slovenia, while on Monday (3 May), some 850 people departed to Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Turkey and the Czech Republic, according to the UNHCR.

Relief Distribution: Distribution from the Skopje branch was suspended on Monday as food stocks need to be replenished at the warehouse from CRS/UNHCR (suppliers of the food). Relief distribution throughout the country was disrupted due to the long holiday weekend in FYROM.

Relief distributions for May will begin in the second half of the month. The planning figure now has now been increased to include 130,000 refugees living with host families, 18,000 host families and an undetermined number of social cases.

Health: The Red Cross Health Coordinator and a Norwegian Red Cross delegate met with NATO and camp officials in the Cegrane camp to finalize the location of the Red Cross Red Crescent field hospital, which will be staffed by delegates from the Norwegian Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent. Equipment and staff will be arriving from Norway on Friday, and the hospital will be operational Sunday evening.

Logistics: In a joint International Federation/ICRC meeting it was decided to coordinate all rapid response initiatives by the Red Cross through the Relief Coordinator at the Federation in order to avoid duplication of efforts. Various organizations working in the field, especially along the mountainous border areas, come upon groups of refugees in need of emergency relief. Contingency stocks are also maintained in the Red Cross warehouse to respond to larger influxes of refugees.

Tracing: The ICRC Tracing service reports that, through 3 May, 412 vulnerable cases (unaccompanied children, elderly, physically and mentally disabled) had been registered. Tracing requests totaled 989 and 183 cases were closed. ICRC estimates that 40-50% of the cases closed were done by individuals spontaneously upon receiving information from the Red Cross database.

External Relations, Information, and Publicity: International Red Cross and Red Crescent Information delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media on Monday (3 May): a French-Canadian radio station, a Hungarian news agency, CBC Radio (French and English programmes), a Croatian radio station, BBC Radio, Reuters, a French-Canadian newspaper and TV station, and TSR (Swiss TV).

The Secretary-General of the Canadian Red Cross visited the Bojane camp yesterday (3 May), which is managed by the Turkish Red Crescent Society.

### ***Albania***

Large population movements over the past few days have brought the total number of refugees in Albania to over 406,000 - with more than 111,000 still in Kukes, the main entry point to the country from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The likelihood of tens of thousands of refugees staying in Kukes for the foreseeable future is very real. Indeed, in the country as whole, there is now a strong possibility that the refugee figure could exceed the half million mark.

Overcrowding in Kukes has assumed dramatic proportions, with numerous refugees being forced to sleep on the streets. Meanwhile plans continue apace for the accommodation of refugees in prefectures other than Kukes, where the security situation remains tense. At the same time, reports are emerging of security difficulties in the camps themselves - including organized crime - adding further to refugees' misery.

Relief Distributions: The joint delegation's overall assistance programme for Albania is ambitious. The current restraining factors remain principally food delivery to the country and onward distribution to the local branches. This latter issue will be alleviated by the signing of the contract via Bulgarian Red Cross to bring in additional vehicle capacity.

Wheat flour remains in short supply. Distributions continue however of the 220 MT already received, which is sufficient for 27,500 beneficiaries for one month. Distributions are also continuing to refugees in the villages around Tirana, with the Red Cross Red Crescent borrowing 40 MT of wheat flour from WFP to maintain the delivery schedule. Present plans require the distribution of two food parcels supplied by the French Red Cross and 4 kg of wheat flour to each refugee.

In Kukes a much needed delivery of 4 MT of baby food has arrived by helicopter, together with some 2,900 food parcels adding to a consignment of 6,000 parcels dispatched to the prefecture by road. Distributions of wheat flour and food parcels are also underway in Shkodra and Elbasan. In the Fier region, all necessary arrangements are in place and food distributions should begin today (Tuesday). In the five villages adjacent to Tirana, distributions were made to host families, with food parcels delivered to 4,422 beneficiaries.

Health: Basic health clinics in Kukes are operating smoothly though an outbreak of meningitis has been reported in the camp in this prefecture managed by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent. The Italian Red Cross is establishing a clinic in its Kavaje camp.

An assessment of the medical/health situation in the south of Albania is currently underway. Two truck-loads of medicines and medical items, provided by the Finnish Red Cross, have been received.

Problems are being encountered with medicines close to expiry date. Under Albanian law no medicine can be imported into the country within six months of expiry and the cost of subsequent disposal is high.

Shelter: More surveys of potential sites for camps have taken place in the Gjirokaster and Devina areas. By the end of the week, it is expected that 10 further camps with a total capacity of more than 35,000 will be fully open.

Water and Sanitation: Following a recent one-week assessment mission, the Federation's Watsan specialist reports that water supplies in Kukes are more than adequate for the refugees' needs (providing 25 litres per day per refugee) but that latrines and garbage collection are problematic. The latrine and garbage problems, although severe, are being tackled by a growing number of organizations and the situation should ease soon.

In keeping with the Red Cross focus on support to refugees with host families, watsan assessments began five days ago in villages surrounding Kukes, where many of the host families live.

Social Welfare: Specialists from the Japanese Red Cross will be in country over the next 10 days carrying out an assessment of problems and challenges faced by the unaccompanied elderly.

A major Red Cross Red Crescent psychological support and social welfare programme is due to start next week. The project will be spearheaded by people in the local communities, including Albanian Red Cross volunteers and refugees themselves. Among key initial objectives is the identification of resource people such as teachers, nurses and social workers and training them to carry out the planned activities. These will include training Red Cross staff and volunteers as well as refugees in how to deal with trauma.

Logistics: At the present time, the delegation has more than 8,500 m<sup>2</sup> of warehouse capacity around the country, as follows: Durres (1,800 m<sup>2</sup>), Elbasan (800 m<sup>2</sup>), Kukes (800 m<sup>2</sup>), Tirana (3,620 m<sup>2</sup>); Shkodra (700 m<sup>2</sup>), and Fier (800 m<sup>2</sup>).

To avoid growing congestion in the Italian port of Ancona the operation has acquired 3,500 sq metres of warehousing in Vasto, a smaller port further down the coast, to be used as the base for further ferry operations.

Telecommunications: Reprogramming and servicing of the delegation's radios is continuing with the newer fleet vehicles scheduled for HF and VHF radio installation, immediately after the older vehicles have been properly equipped. However, an adequate radio network for the delegation has yet to be established, due to a shortage of qualified radio operators.

Tracing: Three family reunions took place in recent days, involving an elderly couple who were reunited with their children, four children in Tirana reunited with their family who were in Macedonia, a 15-year-old boy sheltering in Krume and brought back to his family in Korce, and an ICRC delegate who returned to Geneva with a five year old girl from Kosovo who was reunited with her parents in Switzerland. On 30 April travel documents were issued for 13 families (25 people including children) who will migrate to Canada. The Albanian Red Cross (ARC) has appointed a tracing co-ordinator who will work closely with ICRC tracing staff.

Participating National Societies: The Danish Red Cross has provided the delegation with additional satellite telephones and a facsimile machine which will bring much needed improvements to telecommunications facilities.

External Relations, Information, and Publicity: Among recent visitors to the delegation was the President of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent, who indicated that the National Society was

prepared to forward nine primary health care units to Albania. The Canadian Red Cross Secretary-General is expected later today (Tuesday).

A Red Cross Red Crescent delegate was interviewed in Kukes by AP radio, Swiss radio and USA Today newspaper and also briefed a member of the Italian Red Cross team on the essentials for creating and maintaining good media relations.

Elsewhere interviews have been given to Associated Press, Danish National Radio, CNN, APTN, BBC Albanian Service, Spear radio and Le Monde. TV3 (Italian) began a piece on tracing by following a Red Cross tracing delegate into the field.

Delegation: The delegation's complement of expatriate delegates currently totals 80. The Head of Delegation has briefed the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) on the general situation and discussed, in outline, the prospects for the utilization of the ECHO grants in Albania. Areas covered included: basic food, hygiene, logistics, transport, health, supplementary food assistance to host families and National Society capacity building.

***Outstanding Regional Needs:***

The integrated appeal in response to the crisis in the Balkans launched on 7 April 1999 specified a total beneficiary population of 220,000 (60,000 in FR Yugoslavia, 100,000 in Albania, and 60,000 in FYR Macedonia). With the operation continuing to evolve and entering its second month, beneficiary figures have increased, necessitating a revised planning figure, which will be communicated in due course.

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