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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

Report No. 25

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

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

International Federation Under Secretary General Margareta Wahlstrom arrived in the Federal Republic yesterday at the start of a three-day visit. Accompanied by Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC), ICRC and International Federation representatives, her itinerary includes a visit to Surdulica, which has recently suffered significant damage and civilian casualties. She will also hold talks with the Federal authorities and all three components of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

Further Red Cross convoys of medical and relief supplies are planned this week for Aleksinac, Prokuplje, Vranje and Novi Sad.

VOJVODINA: Power supplies have been cut since late Sunday with no water for a week; a power generator donated by the Red Cross Red Crescent is not yet in use. The Red Cross in Vojvodina reports that the list of priorities is now applicable to all the population includes: matches, candles, petroleum lamps and batteries, washing powder, toilet paper, soup, liquid detergent, cotton, disposable diapers for adults (handicap and elderly), shampoo, tooth paste, sanitary pads, razors, baby food, milk powder, semolina, rice, pasta, yeast, canned food, flour, sugar, oil, salt, beans and ready to eat meals.

MONTENEGRO: During the recent annual assembly of the Montenegro Red Cross the humanitarian situation in the republic was reported to be critical and the unity with the Yugoslav Red Cross confirmed.

Regular relief distributions for April have been completed and the May distribution is awaited, except in Rozaje where deliveries of oil, sugar and wheat flour has started. The need for individual parcels, canned food, blankets, sleeping bags, baby food, baby items and mattresses has been reported by local Red Cross branches.

The new official number of internally displaced from Kosovo in Rozaje is 17,000, a significant reduction on the previous figure of 34,000. In the past few days many displaced

have left Rozaje, while there have been only a few new arrivals; meanwhile the number of social cases in the municipality is increasing steadily.

In Andrejevica, the Red Cross reports that of 714 displaced, 530 have arrived since 1 April. Of these, some 276 are without any friends or relatives and, on the initiative of the Red Cross, have been accommodated in old abandoned houses; sleeping bags are a priority for this group, together with milk powder and baby items.

In Berane the Red Cross reports that there are 2,011 displaced, of which 1,111 have arrived since 1 April. Red Cross priority is being placed on 720 refugees and 1,800 social cases, who have been neglected during the current crisis.

KRALJEVO: In Uzice and Kraljevo region there are some newcomers from Kosovo, but since most of the region is either without electricity or telephone lines, there is no exact data on the number of displaced or Red Cross action and needs.

Mionica: Since late March, Mionica region has been affected by several earthquakes. The epicentre of one event was in the village of Struganik situated in the Maljen foothills. The roofs and chimneys of several hundreds of houses were destroyed. The fissures resulting from an earthquake in this region last October have deepened and new ones have appeared. Water is contaminated and unfit for human consumption.

Pancevo: The air in Pancevo is still polluted due fires in an oil refinery and petrochemical and nitrogen factories. The Red Cross branch has requested equipment to measure air pollution.

Valjevo: The Red Cross branch provided food and hygiene parcels for the families of Krusik workers, whose factory suffered further damage over the weekend; there is a need for tents, mattresses, beds and blankets for accommodating 1,500 homeless people. Two trucks of relief and medical supplies will be sent to the town this week.

Media: All the national dailies and Studio B TV covered the Red Cross relief convoy to Surdulica on 1 May. An RTS local correspondent filmed the event on the spot, together with an interview with a Red Cross coordination delegate.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Large influxes of new refugees into FYROM continued Tuesday (4 May) with 8,400 people crossing into the country. Camps in Macedonia are overflowing as thousand of refugees continue to stream out of Kosovo. Macedonia now hosts 200,000 refugees, which amounts to 10% of the total population.

The UNHCR reports the present camp population to be around 97,000 with an additional 108,000 presently registered with the Macedonian Red Cross. The new camp in Cegrane had 28,500 residents by last night. Several thousand people were forced to sleep in the open as the setting up of tents could not match the continuing stream of new arrivals.

Relief Distribution: The relief field delegate based in Tetovo reported an overnight increase in the number of refugees in the town. Presently, 44,000 are registered with the Macedonian Red Cross (an increase of some 5,000 from Friday) and 3,000 new arrivals - as yet unregistered - have taken refuge in public buildings, discos, and any other available space. A truckload of relief supplies, including blankets, soap, hygiene parcels, diapers and biscuits, is being forwarded to the town in response to the request of the field delegate.

Re-stocking of the Skopje branch's warehouse was carried out earlier this week to allow completion of the April distribution by this coming Friday.

The relief coordinator visited the Blace transit centre on Tuesday (4 May) with the head of delegation to meet with 'Action Against Hunger' officials, responsible for relief in the camp. The concept of the rapid response capacity of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement was elaborated. In case the camp requires additional emergency relief items 'Action Against Hunger' will inform the Red Cross Red Crescent and receive support within hours.

Health: Since opening on 14 April, the Red Cross field hospital in the Stenkovec-Brazda camp has provided over 2,200 referrals, treated 165 inpatients, and carried out 23 operations. The obstetrics department has been quite active with 18 deliveries, three of which were by Caesarean section.

Site preparations are continuing for the hospital in the new Cegrane camp. Ten Palestinian Red Crescent health delegates arrived Tuesday from Albania. Accommodation for the Palestinian and incoming Norwegian staff has been arranged in the villages bordering the camp.

Logistics: 20 mobile phones have been received from Swedish Red Cross; ten have been allocated for use by the International Federation and ten for the ICRC. The Saudi Red Crescent this week dispatched 76 MT of medical equipment, medicines and food from Jeddah to Skopje.

Tracing: Tracing work remains a vital component of Red Cross activities in Macedonia. Tracing offices were first set up in mid-April in the two Stenkovec camps, where a number of tracing requests for unaccompanied children were received. As soon as requests came in, names and possible locations of parents were sent from ICRC offices in Skopje to Tirana. In Tirana, ICRC tracing teams located parents and informed them that their children had been found in Macedonia.

Red Cross tracing activities now take place in all seven refugee camps, and an additional tracing office in Tetovo (40,000 refugees) in western Macedonia is being set up in close coordination with the Macedonian Red Cross. Data collected in the field is cross-checked by computers in the main tracing office in Skopje. So far, more than 150 families have been reunited, 400 unaccompanied children have been registered, as have over 1,000 parents separated from their children. The tracing staff in Macedonia currently numbers 40 people.

Delegation: The International Federation presently has 22 delegates working in country, with an additional 30 German Red Cross health and technical delegates, and three American Red Cross delegates and two Finnish Red Cross delegates working through project delegations. The ICRC delegation numbers 21 expatriate staff.

External Relations, Marketing and Publicity: International Red Cross Red Crescent delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media on Tuesday (4 May): CBS, NBC, CNN, French TV and Radio, Fox Broadcasting-Houston affiliate, CBS TV- affiliate in Boston, Sky News, ITN and French photo agency.

Albania

As set down in Report No 24 (4 May 1999), Albania is now hosting more than 406,000 refugees, with further influxes expected. According to latest figures, almost 270,000 refugees are living with some 42,000 host families. As is shown in a special report below, the border

districts of Kukes and Has are accommodating more than a quarter of all refugees. Figures of refugees that have left Albania and have been resettled in third countries are unavailable. Albania's government policy is not to promote the resettlement of ethnic Albanians out of the immediate region.

RELIEF DISTRIBUTIONS: In recent days, Red Cross Red Crescent relief distributions have been carried out in Fier, Elbasan and Kukes. Despite limited information prior to the distribution in Fier, 669 refugees each received two food parcels provided by the French Red Cross and 8 kg of wheat flour; on current progress, it is expected that this round of distributions will be completed in three days. While detailed figures are not currently available for Elbasan, in Kukes, the Red Cross Red Crescent sub delegation is gradually assuming responsibility for aid distribution in the villages around the town, which should be completed by 21 May.

In the villages near Tirana, 2,363 beneficiaries have received blankets and food parcels provided by the Spanish Red Cross. This round of distribution is considered complete, except in a few villages where wheat flour will be delivered in the coming days.

Among goods dispatched to Albanian Red Cross branches over the past two days were: two trucks loaded with mattresses (350 units), hygiene parcels and kitchen sets to Elbasan; and a truck with mattresses and hygiene kits to Fier. Varying quantities of food parcels provided by the French Red Cross are also being delivered to Kukes, Lezhe, Korce, Elbasan, Fier, Shkodra and Durres. In addition trucks loaded with wheat flour, donated by the German Red Cross, have reached Fier and Korce.

In summary, last week over 600 MT of food parcels and wheat flour were distributed to all six regions throughout the country. However, despite the solid food pipeline in place, there are concerns that supplies may prove inadequate for the huge number of refugees in host families (267,513) and for the host families themselves (42,074).

The Red Cross has distributed full monthly rations (a 20 kg food parcel and wheat flour) to beneficiaries in Tirana and its suburbs. Distributions have been made in Elbasan for 36,709 beneficiaries, while in Kukes the local Red Cross has begun giving food parcels to refugees in host families. Current estimates put the number of beneficiaries in Kukes at 110,000. French food parcels (9,151) of 5 kg each went to refugees in host families, 7,723 kg of ready to eat meals were delivered to collective centres, as were 1,000 1 kg loaves of bread from the World Food Programme.

In the Tirana region there are approximately 71,500 beneficiaries. The 12 villages around Tirana receive monthly distributions and so far, 5,518 refugees in host families have received a 10 kg food parcel and 8 kg of wheat flour. In Tirana itself a monthly distribution was made to 3,590 refugees in host families who had arrived in July. Each refugee received a 20 kg British Red Cross food parcel and a blanket. Some 37 MT of food parcels were dispatched to the Durres warehouse. There are roughly 52,000 beneficiaries in Durres, 30,013 in Shkodra and 22,237 in Fier.

Health: Medical personnel will be in Lac and Kukes today to review the present situation. Medical-evacuation procedures are far from well established in the northern towns and must be finalized in the near future. The Medical Co-ordinator is traveling to Elbasan and Vlore today to inspect the health status in those areas.

SHELTER: The head of delegation and the relief coordinator are traveling to Elbasan today following reports of difficulties, particularly water and sanitation, in the camp managed by the Turkish Red Crescent.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: With the arrival of new computer equipment, the Austrian ERU has begun the installation and coupling of computers and printers in the delegation.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS, INFORMATION aND PUBLICITY: The Secretary General of the Canadian Red Cross traveled to Kukes to view Red Cross Red Crescent activities in the prefecture.

A French television crew will be at Durres port today to film the unloading of a French ship with food parcels for distribution by the Albanian Red Cross. Accompanied by a Red Cross Red Crescent delegate, CNN has visited a host family in the Tirana region.

Special Report : Kukes

The key question for the entire operation in Kukes is presently focused on the timings of refugee movements to the south. Three factors contribute to this scenario. Firstly, the logistics required; secondly, the capacity of the camps in the south and thirdly, the reluctance of refugees in the Kukes region to move. Inevitably there is also the potential for a large influx of refugees from Kosovo at any time.

For the Red Cross Red Crescent the coming days will see a change in emphasis for the operation with the completion of activities in the collective centres and the move into the next phase, assuming the responsibilities of other agencies in providing a full ration for refugees in host families and the host families themselves. (The Italian Red Cross and United Arab Emirates Red Crescent are continuing their work in the camps.)

The carrying capacity of the camps in the south of Albania is of concern to the refugees. The UNHCR adopted a system of taking refugee leaders to the southern camps in order to quell rumours concerning their fears about the lack of facilities in the south. This was both a success and failure at the same time. The leaders were satisfied that the camps are up and running and suitable, however, they also brought back the message that the camps are full. This is a fast moving situation; whilst more space is ready each day, available spaces are taken by new arrivals from Kosovo.

People are reluctant to move from the camps in the Kukes region, as the standard of care is extraordinarily high, with hot meals, showers, bottled water, fresh vegetables, etc being available daily.

The current situation in terms of numbers of refugees in the area of operation (Kukes and Has Districts) is as follows:-

Refugees in host families.

Kukes town

Refugees in host families: 44,253

Number of host households: 4,500

Kukes communes (rural area)

Refugees in host families: 30,067

Number of host households: 2,572

Total number of refugees/host households in Kukes District: 81,392

Krume town (Has District)

Refugees in host families: 8,678

Number of host households: 728

Has communes (rural area)

Refugees in host families: 12,658

Number of host households: 1,227

Total number of refugees/host households in Has District: 23,291

Combined total for Kukes & Has Districts: 104,683

Refugees in centres and other collective areas.

Collective centres served by the Red Cross: 4,493

Camps and collective centres in Kukes (includes Italian Red Cross and United Arab Emirates Red Crescent camps): 20,180

Camps and collective centres in Has District: 1,500

Bajram Curri: 2,500

Total number of refugees in camps: 28,673

Grand total of refugees/host households in Kukes, Has & Tropoje: 133,356

Relief distributions: A two day food ration, totaling more than 10 MT, was distributed yesterday (Tuesday) to 4,263 beneficiaries. The operation was carried out by one relief administrator and 10 volunteers from the Albanian Red Cross, with the items handed over to the refugees' community leaders. As indicated above, this was the last distribution for collective centres served by the Red Cross Red Crescent. UNHCR will take over this operation in conjunction with two implementing agencies (ADRA and CRS). From today (5 May) the Red Cross Red Crescent will concentrate its efforts on refugees in host families and the host families themselves.

Logistics: The sub delegation's logistics department has been working round the clock managing food distribution, air operations, warehousing and the vehicle fleet. Distributions occurred in the collective centres in Kukes and at the Italian Red Cross and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent camps. The distributions comprised 17.8 MT of food items, 1,000 blankets, 1,000 diapers and 100 hygiene kits. The logistics team is currently examining various options for obtaining additional warehousing, including using vacant space near the Italian Red Cross camp. The Kukes sub delegation fleet currently consists of nine landcruisers, five ambulances and two trucks with trailers. There is a current need to strengthen this department with additional logistics delegates and a driver.

Health: The general health situation in the camps is good, and there are no major problems with drug stocks. The medical NGOs are working together very effectively. Yesterday the Finnish Red Cross ERU health clinic treated 300 patients, and is continuing its programme to inoculate 200 children every day with measles and polio. During the inoculations, staff give preventative health care education to the other family members. It is hoped that ultimately the preventative health programme will be further integrated with the Albanian Red Cross. The United Arab Emirates ERU camp is currently running at full capacity (8,000 beneficiaries) with no problems in the camp hospital. The Italian Red Cross Camp hospital treated 30 patients yesterday; its ambulance service from the border to the Italian Red Cross hospital is used regularly, and is most effective.

The Red Cross water-sanitation activity to date has been focused on monitoring the water and sanitation conditions in the refugee camps around Kukes. Coordination between UNHCR and implementing partners has been good, with the Red Cross providing technical and material assistance as required. In order to increase and improve access to safe drinking water, extensive assessments of alternative safe water sources for major town centres and villages hosting refugee populations are on-going.

Tracing: In the early part of this week, the Red Cross tracing office handled 189 phone calls and 89 radio transmissions, and in the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent camp dealt with 100 radio transmissions and 172 telephone calls. Three unaccompanied children were transported from Krume to Kukes and then by helicopter to Tirana to be reunited with their parents. Field officers traveled to Krume yesterday to try and find the mother of an unaccompanied child staying in a collective centre in Tirana. Meanwhile new files have been opened for further unaccompanied children and abandoned elderly people.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Despite a drop in the number of journalists in Kukes, Red Cross Red Crescent activities are still attracting attention. French TV3 are producing a documentary on Red Cross tracing work, spending much of yesterday with an ICRC tracing and message team, continuing their work in Kukes over the next two days. The Kukes subdelegation has also been working closely with a Finnish team, producing a broadcast documentary for the European Community Humanitarian Office focused on Red Cross tracing and message work in Kukes. A Swedish television and radio report is focused on yesterday's success story, where the parents of two unaccompanied minors were traced to Tirana, and the unaccompanied minors then transported by the Red Cross Red Crescent helicopter from Kukes to Tirana, to be reunited with their parents.

Meetings took place yesterday with the local authorities, WFP, UNHCR, and all other implementing partners in the Kukes area.

Bosnia Herzegovina

All non-governmental humanitarian organizations (NGO), assisting Yugoslav refugees entering Bosnia and Herzegovina, met Wednesday in Sarajevo to discuss their further activities. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was represented by participants from the ICRC, International Federation, American Red Cross, United Arab Emirates Red Crescent and both Bosnian entities Red Cross organizations.

NGOs at the meeting decided to split activities within six sector groups: food, non-food, shelter, health and medical, water and sanitation and community service programs. The Red Cross Red Crescent organizations will participate in some of these groups. The NGOs also agreed to meet every week on sector groups in order to extend mutual coordination.

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