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RED CROSS & RED CRESCENT INFORMATION

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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

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The ICRC assessment mission in Kosovo is continuing with its Head of Delegation currently in Pristina, re-establishing contacts with the Kosovo branch of the Yugoslav Red Cross (YRC) and local authorities.

Relief : The Valjevo (western Yugoslavia) branch of the YRC has received over 1,000 individual food parcels, 700 mattresses, 2,000 m² of plastic sheeting and 200 hygienic parcels for distribution to some 1,500 people whose homes were destroyed or damaged.

On 14 May, eight tents, 240 blankets, 80 mattresses and 80 jerry cans were delivered to the Cacak Red Cross branch. Relief assistance comprising three tonnes of white beans and two tonnes of tomato concentrate as well as 50 stoves were dispatched to Montenegro on 14 May.

Health : Five truck loads of relief and medical assistance have arrived in Valjevo. Medical assistance consisting of dressing material, infusion bottles and sets was delivered to the Valjevo hospital. The YRC will receive funds for the printing of 50,000 first-aid leaflets and for its humanitarian pharmacies. The Norwegian Red Cross has donated 250 dressing material kits to the National Society.

On 14 May, ICRC delegates met with members of the Kragujevac Red Cross branch. A medical survey was carried out in the region and it was established that the main hospital badly needs dressing material, suture and other surgical material, anesthesia and antibiotics.

A three-truck convoy left for Montenegro on 14 May with five Norwegian Red Cross sets of material for the treatment of 100 wounded people for 10 days, 26 sets of dressing material (including 6 sets of dressing for burns) 320 sets of bandage gauze, four suture sets and over 1,000 bottles of infusion.

Shelter: In Montenegro, the local crisis board registered 525 new arrivals in Ulcinj (south) on 13 May. The total number registered so far stands at 38,597. Most of the new arrivals are accommodated in collective centres such as the Neptune Camp, MUP-baracks, and the Turjak

and Pine Tree camps. The latest batch of internally displaced has reportedly arrived in poor shape.

Psycho-social support : Within the Red Cross psycho-social support programme, 100,000 copies of the pamphlet "How to help yourself and your family under stressful wartime conditions" have been published and are currently being distributed through the YRC network. In the Vojvodina Red Cross branches, established counseling sessions have been expanded to include new activities such as painting workshops for children. The International Red Cross Red Crescent is providing financial support to the Krusevac Red Cross for its first-aid and psycho-social support programmes.

Tracing : The tracing office in Rozaje in northern Montenegro is now operational and has received numerous enquiries. On 13 May, two telephone lines were set up to enable the displaced to call their families. On the first day, 81 telephone calls were made.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Representatives of the International Red Cross Red Crescent gave interviews or briefings to "Politika", the Tanjug news agency, national TV, various national dailies and weeklies, AP, the BBC and Deutsche Welle Serbian programme.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Latest figures from UNHCR indicate that 154 refugees crossed into FYR Macedonia at the end of last week, though according to unconfirmed media reports, there was more activity over the weekend. Meanwhile, the number of people leaving for third countries continues with another 3,207 departures to Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and USA. A second group of refugees was transferred from FYROM to Albania on Friday (14 May); 42 refugees from the Cegrane and Stenkovec I camps were taken by bus at their request to Albania, where they have relatives.

This brings the total refugee population in FYR Macedonia to 231,100, with 80,700 in camps and 120,400 with UNHCR status in host families, and an estimated 30,000 unregistered elsewhere, according to UNHCR. Macedonian Red Cross figures put the number of refugees accommodated with host families at 130,528.

Over the past week, a series of high profile visits have occurred, including NATO Secretary General Javier Solano, UNICEF ambassador Roger Moore and American First Lady Hillary Clinton. This Wednesday (19 May) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan will visit the country.

Health: Currently there are some 30 in-patients at the Norwegian Red Cross hospital in Cegrane camp, which is also treating 50-100 outpatients daily. There have been six births, including one by cesarean section. A few cases of severe malnutrition have emerged in FYROM - gypsies from Kosovo who had been living in difficult circumstances, made worse by the crisis. Six of the Palestine Red Crescent medical staff will be leaving, to be replaced later this week.

A pediatrician based at the German Red Cross (GRC) hospital is working to install a health management system at both the GRC and Norwegian Red Cross field hospitals. He will train an administrator or local Macedonian Red Cross staff to control data collection and enter it into the Epi Info software application, supervised by a staff doctor.

An assessment by a Red Cross Red Crescent water and sanitation specialist is underway into the quality and distribution of water, and solid waste disposal in the camps and towns with concentrations of host families. His brief includes the development of proposals for meeting

middle and long term needs and identifying a technical counterpart in the Macedonian Red Cross.

Tracing: The Red Cross tracing agency has registered 625 vulnerable people (the majority of whom are unaccompanied children, but also include elderly, physically and mentally disabled persons). A total of 1,285 people made tracing requests through Sunday (16 May). There have been 307 families reunited, including three children who were transported to their families in Albania. The new Red Cross tracing office in Tetevo is scheduled to open tomorrow (Tuesday) with two expatriate staff to handle cases in the city and surrounding area.

Tracing continues to be a vital aspect of Red Cross activity in the camps. Lists of persons who have registered with the tracing offices and names of vulnerable individuals are on display at various sites throughout the camps and are also forwarded to the Tirana office. Requests for family reunifications by vulnerable people have been passed on to the relevant consulates and embassies. The ICRC in conjunction with the Macedonian Red Cross, has transported refugees from one camp to another for the purpose of family reunions, and has assisted the UNHCR with medical evacuations.

An increasingly large number of refugees continue to ask delegates for information and advice on entry into third countries. So far, the Red Cross has urged embassies to give priority to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable individuals.

Among the complement of tracing staff in FYR Macedonia are an administrator, a delegate from the American Red Cross and 14 local staff, including data input operators and secretaries.

Participating National Societies: The President of the New Zealand Red Cross left FYROM on Sunday after visiting the distribution centre and a host family in Tetevo and refugee camps in Stenkovec I/Brazda. He also met with senior officials of the Macedonian Red Cross Skopje branch. Issues discussed included the documentation and sorting of goods in kind. The French Red Cross is carrying out a study into the local purchase of vegetables and other readily available goods.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Red Cross Red Crescent delegates conducted interviews or briefings with the following media over the weekend: Radio Canada, Portuguese newspaper Publico, London Times, London Daily Mail, and the Star Channel/Greece.

Albania

The past weekend has seen almost no change in the total of registered refugees, which remains at just above 444,000; the number accommodated with host families has risen to 303,762. There has also been another significant drop in the Kukes refugee population, down to slightly over 92,000, according to official estimates. Reports of insecurity in the northern part of county continue, particularly in the areas around Letaj, Gagaj and Tropoje.

Health: Red Cross medical personnel visited the hospital in Korce, which treats 10-12 outpatients per day, and report that medical stock levels are adequate for the time being. In Kukes, Shkoder and Lezhe, laboratories set up by ECHO, PHARE, UNICEF and the WHO need reagent supplies in case of epidemics outbreaks.

Shelter: In Durres, two warehouses have been identified and authorized by the prefecture for use as transit facilities for refugees from Kukes, en route to more southerly prefectures. The Semani camp at Fier - funded by the American government - is now operational. Two Red

Cross Red Crescent delegates have recently visited camps managed by the German and the Hellenic Red Cross Societies at Korce (current population 2,500) and Pogradec (710) respectively to gather information.

Logistics: Over the weekend, new procedures for duty-free authorizations of inbound goods came into force at all border crossings into Albania. Such authorizations can only be granted by the respective customs office on site.

Telecommunications: A satellite dish, installed on the delegation roof over the weekend, is providing access to international TV news programmes. A telecommunications delegate has arrived in-country to review present systems and equipment and recommend/implement improvements.

Tracing: Latest figures from the tracing department show: visitors received (2,304); telephone calls made by refugees (9,944); typed radio messages (6,220); unaccompanied vulnerable (80); tracing cases opened (15) and closed (2); parents with lost children (95); unaccompanied children (106); family reunions opened (115) and closed (17).

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Media contacts over the weekend included Spanish National Radio, National Geographic (family reunions), APTN, SPEAR Radio, BBC, ABC and various Albanian newspapers.

Outstanding Needs: With the deployment of some of the delegation's satellite telephones for tracing purposes and the theft of a number of mobile telephones, the Red Cross Red Crescent operation is in need of additional telecommunications hardware.

Kukes Report

Reported insecurity along the Albanian border is seemingly a major factor in the decrease in the number of new arrivals in recent days. Indeed, on 16 May, for the first time in two months, no refugees crossed the border from Kosovo into Albania in a single 24-hour period. According to official figures on the movement of refugees over the weekend, 38 entered the Kukes area, while 10,674 moved south. The number of internally displaced is still being reported as 4,000 in both Has and Tropje districts, though verification of the figures is underway. The security situation within the camps is also deteriorating slightly, with a number of people being hospitalized following incidents.

During the weekend, the five-day information campaign aimed at encouraging refugees to move south encountered some problems. There are parties carrying out counter campaigns (often following the UNHCR/Government speakers) hoping to convince people to stay. The political affiliations of these parties is unclear; what is certain, however, is that individual families are finding it increasingly difficult to make an independent decision to move on their own initiative, in the face of group pressures.

Relief distributions: On 14 and 15 May, the first round of relief distributions for the remaining 2,254 beneficiaries in Krume town was completed. The ration comprised 2,254 French Red Cross food parcels (sufficient for two weeks) and 18.2 MT of wheat flour (one month). On 14 May, 235 beneficiaries in the communes of Bushtrice and Ujmisht, in Kukes district, received a two week ration of French food parcels, amounting to 2.1 MT together with a one month's ration of wheat flour. The second round of distribution commenced in Kukes town on 15 and 16 May, with 26,116 beneficiaries receiving 12,868 food parcels and 35.62 MT of wheat flour.

Logistics: The Kukes sub-delegation recently received, by airlift, 17.5 MT of French Red Cross food parcels and 60.8 MT of Swedish Red Cross food parcels by truck; a consignment of 48.6 MT of wheat flour has also been delivered.

Tracing: The new Red Cross Red Crescent information office for tracing, family reunification and protection requests opened on 15 May. On the same day a tracing/family reunification case was successfully closed. This case involved a 73 year old woman and her 15 year old grandson seeking the daughter/mother and resulted in a family unification in Tirana - courtesy of the Red Cross Red Crescent helicopter.

During the weekend, the protection team visited the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent camp, the Besimi camp and MSF camp. This, and other work, resulted in the following cases/requests being opened: 11 unaccompanied children; 5 special tracing requests; 3 requests for family reunification; 1 medical; 1 Red Cross message (from Montenegro to Kukes Hospital) and 2 debriefings. Over the same period, 1,483 telephone calls and 598 radio messages were transmitted.

External Relations, Information and Publicity: Between 14 and 16 May Red Cross Red Crescent delegates handled the following media enquiries: Agence France Presse featured the distribution of French Red Cross food parcels in Krume, focusing on a host family and refugees in that family; CNN and CNN Spain also focused on food distributions to refugees and host families south of Kukes with coverage achieved from both initiatives; Associated Press conducted interviews at the Finnish Red Cross clinic, as did Kukes Television; the Helsingin Sanomat Kauis Niemi focused on tracing activities, conducting an interview with a delegate.

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