

# ***CRISIS IN THE BALKANS***

*6 April 1999*

*situation report no. 4*

## ***OVERVIEW***

The concern of the International Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement on the current crisis was conveyed to the international community today. Mr George Weber, Secretary General of the International Federation and Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC spoke at the "Humanitarian Issues Working Group of the Peace Implementation Council" in Geneva.

Mr Weber emphasised the Red Cross / Red Crescent mobilisation and response. He made clear that assistance so far has been short term but that the scale of the crisis is beyond the scope of the humanitarian community to solve.

The situation in Kosovo was highlighted by Dr Sommaruga, where the conditions for civilians remains life-threatening and that there is an attempt to drive out the vast majority of the population of Albanian origin. Steps are needed to resolve the situation and he called for the borders to be opened in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and beyond.

## ***LATEST EVENTS AND RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT ACTION***

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

Estimates of internally displaced (IDP) figures in FRY remain rough. In Kraljevo, IDP's from Kosovo continue to arrive. Novi Pazar reportedly now accommodates 2,500 IDP's in addition to its normal caseload of 1,400 refugees. The Kraljevo Red Cross branch is now assisting 2,080 IDP's. In Novi Sad, the Vojvodina Red Cross branch have requested more transfusion kits and dressing material kits. In Nis, 150 IDP's who had been sent to Subotica have returned and are now housed in a sports hall. 30 registered refugees from Kosovo have been resettled in the Nis region. According to the Zajecar Red Cross branch, some of the 450 IDP's who arrived from Kosovo since Friday have left the region, while 120 (6 families) have been accommodated in the Grlan collective centre (where refugees from Bosnia and Croatia have also been accommodated for the past 5 years now). Approximately 70% of the IDP's are children, and baby food and non-food items are needed.

The Yugoslav Red Cross report that the Federal Ministry of Health is strongly supportive of Federation and ICRC programmes within the FRY, and will facilitate the import and distribution of relief commodities as quickly as possible.

The YRC is also preparing to launch an emergency appeal to all national and international donors. The Belgrade Federation staff have offered their services to the local Red Cross to help with enquiries and requests from the public.

There are currently six ICRC delegates in Belgrade, and three delegates from the International Federation.

### *Montenegro*

IDP's continue to arrive at a rate of several hundred a day from Kosovo, but a similar number continue to depart for Albania and the overall number in Montenegro therefore remains stable at present (some 30,000 people). The majority of people are now accommodated in private homes and collective centres in the Rozaje municipality (with others in Plav, Andrijevica, Ulcinja and Berane municipalities). The main priority of the Red Cross is to improve the situation in the collective centres (factories and mosques) which are overcrowded and lacking kitchen and sanitation facilities. The Montenegro Red Cross will increase distribution of blankets, mattresses and food to these centres.

There are currently eight ICRC delegates in Montenegro and one delegate from the International Federation.

### *Albania*

Over 230,000 people are now reported as having arrived in Albania. The thousands of refugees which were heading for the unstable area of Bajram Curri are now to be lodged in Kukes. Relief is now being moved to the border areas but the quantities are still inadequate. The shelter problem has improved with people now housed in transit collective centres (public buildings such as schools and mosques) or tented camps. No firm figures are available on the number of shelters in the country, but at least 6 collective transit centres have been organised in Kukes (with plans to set up three more) and two in Kruma.

A measles outbreak has been reported in Kukes, with 4 confirmed cases. A vaccination campaign will take place immediately, and vaccines are most urgently required. Diarrhoeal diseases are also on the increase. The Red Cross intends to isolate the measles cases (if the measles outbreak worsens) by erecting 12 tents with a capacity for 96 persons in Kukes.

To date, in addition to the material already reported, the following emergency supplies have been distributed by Red Cross teams: In Kukes, 5,000 food parcels for some 20,000 refugees staying in host families, 8,000 rations of bread, cheese, canned food, milk and compact biscuits to 6,000 people in six collective transit centres and individual parcels to 100,000 refugees arriving. In Kruma, compact biscuits for over 20,000 refugees staying in host families and 2,000 refugees in two collective transit centres.

The Albanian Red Cross (ARC) maintains its assistance operation in the Kukes area with staff and some 40 volunteers, and a Federation Sub-Office has now been established in Kukes with ICRC delegates also present. In Tirana, ARC volunteers are distributing food parcels in the refugee camps and the collective centres. Volunteers at local Red Cross branches throughout the country are taking part in the distribution of food and non-food items.

For those refugees that have lost contact with their relatives, Radio Tirana, Voice of America and Deutsche Welle continue to broadcast the details and location of 50 families per day.

There are currently 14 delegates from the International Federation and 16 ICRC delegates in Albania.

### *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

Red Cross workers report that people are continuing to arrive in the "no-man's land", increasing the overcrowding there despite that 22,000 people are now accommodated in a transit camp close to Skopje. Shelters of plastic sheeting have begun to be erected in the "no-man's land" but the health situation could deteriorate due to the amount of human waste in the area. Red Cross teams continue to distribute food, medicines, liquids, blankets and shelter material and have begun the process of reuniting children who were separated from their families. Of major concern are the thousands of people estimated to be waiting to enter the "no-man's land" from Kosovo as humanitarian assistance has yet to reach this group.

11 ICRC delegates and 7 Federation Delegates are currently assisting the relief operation.

## ***OUTSTANDING NEEDS***

Ready to eat meals, tents, food, hygiene items, mattresses, blankets and first aid kits remain the priority items. Water and sanitation problems in Kukes are increasing, leading to fears of epidemic outbreaks. The biggest need however at this point remains shelter. The Federation urgently requires 30 relief, logistics, finance/administration delegates for the operations in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## ***CONCLUSION***

The International Federation and ICRC will launch the 'International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's Integrated Appeal in Response to the Crisis in the Balkans' on Wednesday 7 April.

The scale of the ongoing crisis demands coordinated action. The Federation and ICRC advises all Participating National Societies that a joint logistics unit has been formed to facilitate the Movement's operation, and it is critical that all donors and National Societies inform this unit of planned dispatch of goods and check details of outstanding needs. (contact Charles Bernimolin, Federation, and John Wert, ICRC, at: 041 22 730 2143 or 041 22 730 2204; *Fax*: 041 22 733 9460; *email*: fedicrcbalkanlog.gva@icrc.org).

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