

CRISIS IN THE BALKANS

9 April 1999

situation report no. 7

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. This is the last edition that will be sent to donor governments.

However, the report can still be found on the above mentioned websites or made available on request.

LATEST EVENTS AND RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT ACTION

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

A Red Cross team is visiting the Nis and Vranje region of Serbia to assess the needs of the civilian population affected by the air strikes. Further humanitarian assistance (1,000 mattresses, 2,000 M2 of plastic sheeting) will be distributed in Aleksinac tomorrow. The Yugoslav Red Cross estimates that there are currently some 12,000 displaced people in Serbia. YRC branches continue to distribute food and non-food assistance to the displaced.

Montenegro

Red Cross assessments of the humanitarian needs of the displaced in collective centres continue. Distributions of emergency supplies continue and further efforts will be made to improve the water and hygiene facilities of the centres. There are currently some 30,000 displaced people in Montenegro.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The borders with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remained closed yesterday (Thursday).

Macedonian Red Cross (MRC) teams are undertaking essential relief activities in the camps of Stenkovic, Bojane, Radusa, and Nprosteno. In the Radusa transit camp, the Red Cross has provided food and some 8,000 lt. of water to the refugees and a more permanent water supply is being installed. In Bojane, the Red Cross has just supplied the camp with much needed medical items and is helping, in particular, a number of pregnant women, new-born infants and their mothers. High protein biscuits have been provided to the Tabanovce camp.

MRC distributions of basic necessities to the 46,000 Red Cross beneficiaries living with host families throughout Macedonia is continuing. Five Red Cross relief delegates have been assigned to support the Society and gather information on the condition and needs of the refugees and their hosts.

Meanwhile Red Cross delegates on the spot reported an orderly exodus of ethnic Albanian refugees through the airport in Skopje. In at least one camp, Stenkovic, refugees are queuing up to sign on to lists for transport to third countries. The process is becoming standardised, with additional departures being organised for today (Friday).

The Red Cross are concerned for the thousands of refugees blocked at Jancize where Red Cross teams

The reception camp at Blace, evacuated two nights ago, will now be bulldozed for public health reasons. The Red Cross is working with other NGOs to assist 25 elderly invalids left behind during the evacuation - and to ensure longer-term care. The Red Cross and other agencies are working to establish a welcome centre, in anticipation of any further developments, and are installing sanitation facilities.

Tracing remains a major Red Cross priority. With refugees transferred to various camps, Albania and other countries, the separation of families in this process is of continuing concern. In the transit camps, tracing focal points have now been set up with hundreds of unaccompanied children (or requests to locate children) registered by the ICRC and other humanitarian organisations.

An ICRC plane arriving with 6,000 blankets, 24 metric tons of high protein biscuits and 4 metric tons of compact food was immediately off-loaded and the items delivered to the refugee camps. Lice shampoo and soap are also available for distribution from Red Cross stocks and feminine hygiene products will be purchased soon.

Albania

According to the Albanian authorities there are now 290,000 refugees in Albania. The three border points along Albania's frontier with Kosovo province, which were closed on Wednesday night (7 April), remain closed, but refugees are still able to enter the country from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and from Montenegro.

The following relief supplies arrived in Tirana on 7 & 8 April:

- Swiss Red Cross plane of 20 MT of bulk food
- Danish Red Cross plane of 3.5 MT medical supplies & 30 MT of food
- British Red Cross convoy of 10,000 hygienic kits
- Finnish Red Cross convoy of used clothes and 800 tents
- German Red Cross convoy of 20 MT of flour
- Belgium Red Cross plane with 7,800 blankets and 600 cooking sets.

Korce and Pogradec

An International Red Cross team has just completed an initial survey of the situation of the estimated 11,000 refugees who were transported late Tuesday by bus by the Macedonian authorities from Blace to the Albanian towns of Korce and Pogradec and surrounding areas. The team reports the refugees have been housed either with local host families or in shelters set up by the prefectures in sports centres and public buildings.

The number of refugees in Pogradec is approximately 1,700, of whom 400 are with host families and 1,300 in shelters. A local charity Nehemia Shqiperi (Evangelic Alliance) has established an extremely well equipped shelter and with the support of the prefecture has undertaken to provide food, water, sanitation and medical care in all the shelters. It has also put in place a registration system through its computer network.

There are an estimated 9,000 refugees in Korce district, of whom approximately 4,000 are staying with host families in some 17 surrounding villages. Another 1,500 are in the Korce Sport Centre, 230 are with host families in Korce and the balance, 3,270, are in five other camps in the town. Their food, water, hygiene and medical needs are being met by the prefecture, the local branch of the Albanian Red Cross, and other local and international aid organisations.

Immediately after the refugees' arrival, the ARC headquarters in Tirana sent a team to Korce to support the branch in the distribution of relief items. Red Cross volunteers provided blankets, biscuits and milk for children, tinned vegetables and meat, toilet soap and water for about 1,700 persons in the Sport Centre and one other camp. Distributions, providing 10,000 food parcels and 10,000 hygiene parcels,

will continue in the outlying locations. The Red Cross team reports the situation is under control, but that sanitation could soon become a problem in the shelters.

Kukes

A total of 7,700 refugees were moved southwards out of Kukes yesterday by road or by helicopter. To improve these transfers the authorities are now taking measures to start using trains.

There have been no further reports of cases of infectious diseases in the camp, but plans for a vaccination campaign, covering both the refugees and the local population, are being worked out by UNICEF and the health authorities. Five Red Cross ambulances were due to arrive in Kukes today. Another five will be stationed in Tirana.

In the Kukes and Kruma area, the Red Cross are providing food regularly to 60,000 people housed in host families and collective transit centres. To support the local medical facilities, the ICRC has established two medical clinics in the town of Kukes and the Federation is currently setting up a clinic for people staying in the transit centres (see below, under ERUs).

With many families having lost contact with their relatives, the broadcast of family details on radio networks is continuing. Close to the border, the Red Cross telephone link for the refugees has proved very successful and a further five portable telephones will be dispatched to Albania today by the ICRC.

Emergency Response Units

Following assessments by Federation Health Delegates, five Emergency Response Units (ERUs) -- trained groups of specialists and Red Cross volunteers from National Societies, with the appropriate specialised equipment -- are being deployed to Macedonia and Albania.

In Macedonia, a Specialised Water ERU, installed 7 April, is producing up to 120,000 litres of water per day in the Stenkovic camp. In the same camp, a ERU Referral Hospital became operational yesterday, providing services such as surgery and limited trauma, internal medicine, obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics and an out patient department.

In Albania, a Telecommunications ERU, due to arrive today, will assist in establishing communication links between Tirana and Kukes and reinforce communications between the field and Geneva. Finally, two Basic Health Care ERUs, scheduled to arrive tomorrow, will each provide basic curative, preventive and community health care for a population of 20,000 - 30,000. One clinic will be established in Kukes; the site for the other clinic will be decided according to emerging needs.

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:**

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